Library of the Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

BS 650 .M34 1880
Macmillan, Hugh, 1833-1903.
Two worlds are ours

Shelf

TWO WORLDS ARE OURS.

TWO WORLDS ARE OURS.

BY

HUGH MACMILLAN, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.,

AUTHOR OF "BIBLE TEACHINGS IN NATURE," "THE TRUE VINE,"
"THE SABBATH OF THE FIELDS," ETC. ETC.

"*Two worlds are ours: 'tis only sin*
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky."

KEBLE.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1880.

The Right of Translation and Reproduction is Reserved.

London:
R. Clay, Sons, and Taylor,
Bread Street Hill, E.C.

Library of Princeton
DEC 7 1
Theological Seminary

INTRODUCTION.

"To the solid ground
Of nature trusts the mind which builds for aye."

So wrote Wordsworth, and his words have their highest application in theology. While, like Jacob's ladder, its top is poised upon the throne of God, its base rests upon the familiar earth. It ascends from the earth and descends to the earth from its highest flights. The Divine revelations of the Bible were not communicated directly from heaven, but were acted out historically upon the earth. They were not painted on empty air, but were run into the mould of existing circumstances, and took their shape and colour from the things of nature and of man. The whole Bible is a Jacob's ladder, ascending by successive steps of the unfolding of the Divine scheme and the progress of doctrine—from the ground, as

it were, of the sublime account of the creation at the beginning—to the sublime account of the city of God in heaven at the end. And as with the Bible as a whole, so with all its individual parts. It is the same Spirit which brooded over the primeval chaos, and brought light out of darkness, and life out of death, that broods over the spiritual world, and forms the new creation of God. From the glory of the visible heavens the Psalmist ascends by harmonious steps to the perfect law of the spiritual universe; "the heavens declare the glory of God; the law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." The miracles of the Bible take their starting point from substances and forces already on the spot, and are simply the making bare of its clothing of second causes, upon which alone we are prone to rest as ultimate facts, of the Almighty Arm which regulates the ordinary course of nature. Between the principles or laws of the spiritual realm and the forces acting in the visible world, there is the same correlation which we find among these natural forces themselves. Are not the laws of Providence and Grace different aspects of the same Heavenly Wisdom and Love? The duties which the Bible prescribes and the relations which it hallows

are the true human duties and relations glorified with the light of heaven. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, just as the heaven of heavens is His. He who made man after the image of God made earth after the pattern of heaven; and, therefore, all that is purely human, all that is purely natural, is full of His glory. Hence the Bible considers the heathen to be without excuse, inasmuch as "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." And hence, too, the parabolic teaching of our Saviour was not the imparting of new truth previously unknown, but the lifting of a veil from truths that, from the creation of the world, were uttering their unheeded lessons to the world.

The physiologist who would master the science of biology must study and compare the dual forms—the animal and the vegetable, in which life presents itself in nature. And so the theologian who would seek to understand in some measure the deep things of God, must study the twofold revelation that He has given to us—in His word as written in the Bible, and in His word as written in the hieroglyphics of nature. And just as the physiologist, finding innumerable

analogies of organization and function, on comparing the two parallel forms of organic life, is profoundly impressed with the unity of creation; so the theologian, in collating the acted and the written revelations of God, finds most striking analogies at all points between them, and is convinced that all the great facts, laws, and aims of the two dispensations are correlated and work together for the same glorious end.

The testimony of the rocks is not engraved upon a single page, finished and spread out once for all before our eyes. It consists of a multitude of records; it is composed of the revelations of different strata and epochs. And is it not so in the Bible? It is not a single revelation given at one time and in one way, but God at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers, and in the last days by the mouth of His own Son. The communication of the Divine plan was given in fragments and parts—now a little, and then a little, with long intervals during which no addition was made to the heritage of truth. But, further, we observe, that multifarious as are the pages of nature's record, a profound harmony of design pervades them all. Throughout the ages of the geologist and the spaces of the astronomer—as throughout

all the kingdoms of nature—we find, amid endless variety, a substantial unity—unity of force amid diversity of phenomena; unity of plan amid diversity of expression. The unity of form and structure which pervades the whole of organic life is the basis of all our systems of classification, and of all the grand generalisations of modern science. One of the greatest discoveries of the present day—rivalling the discovery of the law of gravitation itself—is the doctrine of the correlation of forces, the interchangeability in quality and quantity of motion, light, heat, electricity, magnetism, and chemical action. And hardly less important is the other great scientific doctrine of our age, immensely confirmed by the wonderful revelations of the spectroscope—the law of continuity which pervades and embraces the whole physical universe; so that in all systems of matter, in suns and stars as on our own earth, the elements are the same; and in all forms of life there is one unbroken gradation. And all these forces and forms are co-ordinated with one specific end in view. But more wonderful still is the harmony that exists among the varied elements of the Bible. In nature we find the moulding to the Divine will of plastic matter, of dead forms and

forces that have no liberty of action. But in the Bible we see the moulding by Divine inspiration and guidance of *free wills and living minds*, exercised in the most varied circumstances, and exposed to the most widely different influences. And yet with all the variety of circumstance and independence of mind among the writers, we find a symmetry of individual parts and a grand unity of the whole, which is all the more extraordinary when we contrast it with the endless confusion of opinions regarding subjects of the highest interest to mankind, in uninspired works of different ages. No incongruity can be detected in any part from Genesis to Revelation; but, on the contrary, each part is bound to all the others by a wonderful fulness and subtlety of connection. Throughout every part one great purpose runs; everything is tending to one point, and working together for one grand consummation. The last words heard from the lips of the risen and glorified Redeemer, recorded by St. John, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city," are but the fulfilment of the words written by Moses in the opening chapters of the Bible.

Throughout nature there is a law of progression. We see it distinctly in the geological record, in which more and more orderly arrangements of the earth's surface, purer skies, and higher systems of life succeed one another, until in the last ages the earth becomes a garden fit for man's habitation and culture. We see it in the growth of living organisms, from the germ to the mature state. And this law of progression operates in every case, not by addition, but by expansion. The fundamental law of development is a differentiation—a passing from simplicity to complexity, from unity through diversity to a higher unity. We have the oak in the acorn, the branch and leaf in the bud, and the fruit in the flower. The cell-form in the embryo is the representative of many widely-separated cell-forms in the mature individual. And so also in the geological history of that greater and more complex organism—the animal and vegetable kingdom. One form in the early periods stood as the representative of many widely-separated forms in its present mature condition. "Nature first sketched out her work in general terms, and then elaborated each subordinate idea in separate families; all these families, taken together as an organic whole, still containing

the original idea in a more developed form." And this fact that all the infinite diversity of nature is but the gradual unfolding of the original Divine conception —the expansion of the whole idea contained in the original germ—gives an overwhelming impression of the unchangeableness, the all-comprehensive intelligence and fore-knowledge of God. And do we not find a similar law of progression, of differentiation from simplicity through complexity to a higher unity, in the Bible? The whole record of revelation is but the unfolding of the same plan of salvation indicated at the very beginning. We see the primeval promise announced in the vaguest and simplest form at first, merely as a victory of the seed of the woman over the seed of the serpent, without mention of any individual conqueror or of the mode of victory. But as time rolls on we find the promise more and more differentiated; first, in the descendants of Shem; then in the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; then in the tribe of Judah; then in the family of David; and at last the seed of the woman appears in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. And with this progressive definition of the person of the Conqueror, we have a clearer and more comprehensive idea given to

us of the nature and mode of His work. And just as in the earliest fauna and flora of the earth one class stood for many, the earliest families combined the character of several families afterwards separately introduced; so at the successive periods of the unfolding of God's great promise, we find "one individual representing the history of the race, and foreshowing, in brief, the essential character of large phases and long periods of human development." Surely when we thus find the same law of progression in nature and in the Bible we may believe that there is a continuity between them; that the scheme of redemption is, so to speak, but the grand continuation—the Divine climax and evolution of the same comprehensive plan which was sketched in outline at the foundation of the world.

When the scientific man asserts, as the latest generalisation of his science, that nature always moves along the same path—that law is a necessity of things—he simply adds his own amen to the Christian affirmation; for the very belief in miracles depends upon this uniformity, for where there is no law there is no transgression, and the exception here, as elsewhere, proves the rule. Science, therefore, with all the

manifold and impressive evidences which it brings forward of the universal government of natural law, has not advanced a single step in proving the impossibility of miracle. It has, indeed, limited the region of miracle, and cleared way the obstructions of false ecclesiastical prodigies and superstitious beliefs, but in so doing it has caused the Christian miracles to shine forth in all their bright significance and unique grandeur. Scientific law, we must remember, is merely a question of observed fact and not of inherent necessity; it does not touch at all the question of causality; and therefore its argument does not affect the Bible position that a change in the sequence of nature did occur on certain *adequate* occasions. We must not confound, as is so often done, the law with the executive. They are as distinct in nature as they are in human economy. Law is not power, but only the mode or design of power; and design and power can never reside in things—they can only belong to a Being. The mere invariableness of certain phenomena is not the cause of that invariableness. It presupposes an intelligent, voluntary, and Almighty agency. And if so, may He not, at rare intervals, and for higher specific purposes,

deviate harmoniously from the usual method of His administration? Indeed, it is evident that the measure of the probability of miracles is exactly that of the existence of God Himself.

But what does nature herself say to this question? Do we not find numerous exceptions to the ordinary operation of the laws of nature? It is the ordinary law, for instance, that fire should burn; and this we conceive to be the whole of the law with respect to the action of fire. But it is well known to scientific men that fire may be made so hot as not to burn; that substances which, at a lower temperature, chemically combine and form new compounds, remain distinct and separate at a more elevated temperature. And this extraordinary law of heat is not antagonistic to the ordinary law, but in entire harmony with it. Further, it is the ordinary law that substances should decrease in size and become of greater specific gravity with decrease of temperature; but every one knows that water expands in freezing, occupies more room, and becomes perceptibly lighter when it assumes the shape of ice. Gravitation is the most universal of all known physical influences, ranging throughout all the

time-worlds as well as all the space-worlds; and yet its operation is restrained by the law which determines the diffusion of gases. Up to a certain point the law of gravitation is permitted to rule without exception; but all at once it is suspended by the law of gaseous diffusion, by means of which the heaviest and the lightest gases are so commingled, irrespective of their gravity, as that any given portion of air, at whatever height, always contains the same relative proportion of constituents. May we not then look upon miracles as standing in a somewhat similar relation to the usual order and method of nature; as "the intervention of a spiritual law which is within, and thus above, every natural law, and which being necessarily in perfect harmony with it, may dignify and expand its operation, but can never contradict it." The exceptions to the ordinary course of nature in the miracles of the Bible are — like the exceptions of which the ordinary course of nature itself is full — only "varied utterances of one grand and simple ordinance, that equally governs the common and the strange." And it is most instructive to find, that just as the *natural* exceptions to the ordinary laws of nature are uniformly fraught with some wise

and gracious purpose, which the ordinary methods of nature could not accomplish; that just as the expansion of water in freezing preserves it in a liquid state for the use of organic life; just as the extraordinary law of heat, suspending its ordinary effects, preserves to us the light and heat of the sun, caused by the combustion of dissociated elements, which, at a lower temperature, would combine and extinguish the sun by its own ashes; just as the restraining of gravity by the law of diffusion of gases prevents the heavy carbonic acid gas from resting at the lowest stratum of the air, to the inevitable destruction of all animal life, and spreads it harmlessly through the whole atmosphere; so the miracles of the Bible serve grand moral purposes, and were uniformly charged with some errand of mercy which could be accomplished by no other means. Instead of making light, as it has been well said, of the ordinary operations of nature by the display of extraordinary powers, the miracles, on the contrary, impart to these ordinary methods of nature a special and heavenly glory, and teach us that the commonest things are as much God's doing as the rarest.

Prophecy is usually classed with miracles as one of the special distinctive features of Divine Revelation,

liable to the same objections. But if the physical element in miracles, though a departure from the ordinary course of nature, be shown to be yet rather with than against nature, and to have, as we have seen, numerous analogies in the exceptions of nature itself, what shall be said if it be shown, in a similar way, that the principle of prophecy or prefiguration is one that pervades all nature? What was the deposition of the coal-fields throughout the ages of the geologist, but practically one long continuous prophecy of the coming of a being who, in the fulness of time, was to receive the blessing, "Subdue the earth," and to incur the curse, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"? Visit one of those iron mines upon which the prosperity of our country so largely depends, and you will be greatly struck with the collocation of all the materials needed to render iron serviceable to the purposes of man; of the ore of the metal, and the coal and limestone required for its reduction and flux, and the refractory substance necessary for the furnace, and the clay of which the fire-bricks are composed. Shall we regard this marvellous combination of materials in one place as a mere fortuitous concourse of atoms? Is it not rather the shadow cast before of the great human world of civilization, the prolepsis or prophecy

of the development of the genius of intelligent creatures, destined in remote futurity to wield the elements of nature for the ends of mind? There is not a sublimer prophecy in Scripture than that which was written upon earth's tables of stone, as they were slowly and successively deposited for the production and storing of fuel and of implements for the service of races yet unborn. All the prophecies of the Bible have sprung out of that one primeval one, and rest upon it as their foundation. Survey the face of nature as it is now arranged, and you will find everywhere similar prospective contrivances, acted prophecies, in their own order as wonderful and convincing. Everything lower in order, or earlier in time, prophesies the coming of something higher and better than itself to follow in due course, and to announce in its turn something higher still. The mineral world sends forth its herald voice in its crystallisations to proclaim the coming glory of the vegetable kingdom. The world of plants in its structure and functions is full of presignificances of the animal world; there is hardly anything in the one which is not paralleled in the other and earlier system. The blossom is foretold at every stage of growth in the plant, by signs that become more and more significant as the period of

flowering draws nigh. And the advent of man himself is predicted not only by the progressive arrangement of the earth's surface through vast cycles of time, but also by a corresponding uniform ascent and approach to the physical structure and form of man in the creatures that appeared in the successive epochs. In the first zoophyte that dropped its anchor in the most ancient sea, man was created by anticipation in the thought of God; and parts of the economy of all the lower animals that preceded man, which exist but as symbols in them, acquire use and significance in him. We thus see that the prophecies of Scripture are of a cognate character with the inarticulate signs of nature, and are but the continuation, for still higher and nobler purposes, and conveyed in the grander shapes of human consciousness, of the ancient prophecies of the globe itself.

The same things may be said regarding sacred typology—another of the distinctive features of the Bible, which is indeed but another aspect of prophecy. Exception has been taken, especially to the various typical and shadowy rites of the Levitical law, as being unworthy of God, and extremely unlikely to have been the subject of Divine communication. But apart altogether from the fitness of such a system

to teach, by object-lessons as it were, minds so rude and ignorant as to be incapable of forming a conception of the abstract ideas of God's holiness and of man's sinfulness, and of the necessity of mediation between them—the typology of Scripture is founded upon, and is but the clearer and fuller continuation of, the older typology of nature. There were types and shadowy rites in existence long before the Levitical law was proclaimed; and all the great ideas of the Jewish economy were presented in a vaguer and more obscure form in the objects and processes of creation. It is most significantly said that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world; and this Divine statement was meant to refer not only to the purposes of God and the arrangements of human history, but also to the constitution of the earth itself. Redemption was no accident, no afterthought, no desperate remedy suggested by the necessity. The Lamb was verily foreordained *before* the foundation of the world; and redemption was the key-note of creation to which all its parts and purposes were set in tune. Not only was the sin of man foreseen; but the world was moulded by the Redeemer, "without whom," it is most suggestively said, "was not anything made that was made," to be the theatre

of the redemption of the sinner. The precious mineral and vegetable substances used in medicine were formed at the beginning, and had a Divine reference to the purposes for which we employ them, viz. the alleviation or removal of the physical effects of man's fall. The natural objects which our Saviour employed to illustrate the various aspects and relations of the scheme of grace, were made at first with that end in view, although it needed the Great Interpreter to explain their significance to us. The first seed that germinated on our earth was a type of Him who said of Himself, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The first animal that gave up its life to nourish the life of another was an unconscious type, like the murdered innocents of Bethlehem, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. There is thus a sufficient family likeness between the types of God's Word and the types in His works to warrant us in ascribing them to the same Divine origin, and in believing that they refer to the same great object which consecrates and ennobles them both.

And in connection with this remedial scheme, how striking are the correlations between the purposes of grace and the arrangements of nature! With the

sentence of doom, "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," are correlated the natural facts, that the staff of human life is an annual grass, requiring to be sown and reaped afresh every year; that all the esculent vegetables are annual or biennial; and that trees which produce human food are remarkably short-lived as compared with other trees, and require constant culture and attention to prevent their degeneration. We are accustomed to hear that the law of human toil in the sweat of the brow does not apply to the indolent inhabitants of the South Sea islands; for there the bread-fruit-tree drops into man's lap his daily bread without any trouble. But even here, there is no exception to the primeval sentence; for of the two varieties of the bread-fruit-tree, the wild kind that yields seed and propagates itself without the aid of man is worthless as food, while the edible kind is seedless, and therefore requires to be propagated by human toil and care. How greatly the process of man's redemption from the effects of the curse, of his rise in morals and in intelligence, is aided by this wise arrangement of nature, it would be difficult to estimate. Did his food grow like acorns or beech-mast upon long-lived trees, requiring no toil or care or forethought of his own, the most efficient means to man's advancement

would have been wanting; the curse would have deepened his degradation, instead of containing, as it does now, at its core, the means of its own removal, the inverse aid of man's physical and spiritual progress. With the dispersion of mankind at Babel on account of sin were correlated the wise arrangements of land and water on the surface of the earth, and the different productions of different soils and climes, breaking up mankind into nations, separating them from one another within well-defined boundaries, preventing a general combination for evil, leading to the development of national character and experience, and thus preparing the way, through the differentiation of separate culture, for the removal of the effects of Babel, and the higher unity of faith at Pentecost. How strikingly do the laws of the unwritten revelation give their sanction to those of the written revelation! The laws of health and organisation co-operate with the laws of spiritual being to bless the man who obeys the precepts of the Bible, and to punish him who disobeys them. The mildew, the moth, and the rust, the annual nature of our harvests, and the fleeting character of our natural possessions, all lend additional force to the tenth commandment, and give effect to our Saviour's injunction, "take no thought for the morrow." And may

it not be said that with the progress of mankind—their elevation above the lowest effects of the curse—are correlated those grand discoveries of modern science, which prove to us the overwhelming importance of the invisible as compared with the visible, which show to us that the true essence and meaning of all things is hidden from our natural sight, and thus lend their own peculiar and solemn emphasis to the apostolical injunction, which bids us "look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal." The law of continuity throughout the space-worlds and the time-worlds teaches us that the future life will be the counterpart of this; an *inheritance* for which we are trained here, as the heir grows into acquaintance with the large and rich estate upon which he was born. And as the caterpillar becomes the butterfly by casting its skin and unfolding parts previously concealed and immature—as the petal of the rose is just its green leaf altered in texture, colour, and form, to fit it for a higher ministry, the eye of the naturalist discerning the identity of type that exists between them—so this very mortal of ours shall put on immortality, and the life to come will only be the blossom of the life that now is. We are learning more and more through a clearer understanding of

the law of continuity, that heaven is not so much a distant bourne towards which we are to move, as a present experience which we are to realize; not a sudden giving but a gradual winning; that the kingdom of heaven does not come to earth—as we pray that it may do—but must grow on earth. All these correlations of the natural world with the spiritual, and the list might be indefinitely extended, are surely striking proofs that they are parts of one and the same great remedial scheme, and that they have the same great object in view, the one in a lower, the other in a higher form, viz. the glory of God in the redemption of fallen man.

And this brings me to the great truth of the atonement of our Lord, which is the grandest and most distinctive thing in the Bible, for the sake of which, indeed, the Bible was produced. Very superficial must be the study of the natural and human worlds that overlooks the vast concurrent testimony which they give to this vital truth. In certain of its aspects the atonement is no unique doctrine, no startling theme. The oldest fact of nature, the inmost fact of society, the greatest fact of Christianity meet and are one on Calvary. The cross of Christ was planted upon the limestone rocks of Jerusalem, composed of

the remains of myriads of creatures that had yielded up their life in order that the foundations of the earth might be laid for man, and an altar formed on which the great sacrifice for his sin might be offered. And this fact is significant of the higher fact that the atonement of Christ is the grand continuation, or rather the Divine climax, of that system of intervention and vicarious suffering which pervades the natural world, alleviates so much of its misery, and adds so much to its beauty and order. We see the law of vicarious action at work in the plant yielding up its life in order that the animal may be nourished, and in the sacrifice of the animal in order that the nobler life of man may be sustained. Starch, sugar, and oil —substances essential to the support of man—are produced at the expense of the vitality of the vegetable cells in which they are developed, and from which we extract them. We ourselves live by a constant process of interstitial death; the death and elimination of old particles being necessary for the formation of new, and the forces of repair being stimulated by the forces of decomposition. We cannot digest our food without sacrificing for the purpose a portion of our own substance, in the shape of the gastric juice, which is living matter on the descending scale arrested and sent back

to minister to our vitality. Physiologists tell us that the gastric juice is formed in minute cells of complex structure, which run a short life-history of development, growth, and death, and are contained in tubes lining the membrane of the stomach. Every act of digestion involves the sacrifice of some of these cells. The doctrine of substitution pervades the whole science of chemistry, in which we find numerous examples of one element of congeners replacing another, while still the general character of the compound is maintained. What is the principle upon which the familiar mustard plaster depends for its efficacy? Is it not the power which one organ possesses to undertake the work of another, when that other is partially or temporarily disabled? We stimulate the skin to do duty for the inflamed liver or lungs, until these organs recover to do their own work. It would be impossible to enumerate all the striking examples of vicarious or substitutionary action to be seen in the natural world. The very commonest processes of nature are mediatorial. And the same principle follows us into the higher sphere of human life. The whole fabric of the moral world is held together by this principle. From the hour that the mother gives birth to her child—alas! too often at the sacrifice of her own life—to the hour

when loving hands wipe the death dews from the brow, and loving hearts are wrung with the agony of bereavement, there is hardly a joy that we feel or a trouble from which we escape, which we cannot trace to the mediation of another, often effected through pain or loss or sorrow to the mediator. Surely, then, if we can trace in the arrangements of dead matter and of organic life, and in all the relations and acts of the human world, one continuous system of substitution and mediation, carried on for the safety and well-being of nature, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a like but a far higher principle should exist in regard to the higher relations of man, which endure for ever.[1] Thus viewed, is there anything which can reasonably shock our feelings that sinful, suffering man should be pardoned and reconciled to God, through the vicarious obedience and death of the Incarnate Son? Is not the law of redemption in harmony—in continuity—with the law of God's other departments of work? May we not use in regard even to the atonement the words of Solomon?—"I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, or taken from it; and

[1] See Pritchard's admirable *Analogies in the Progress of Nature and Grace.*

God doeth it that men should fear before Him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been." Are we not led up the great aisle of nature to the altar on Calvary; and prepared by all the facts of nature and of human life for regarding the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus with adoring faith? And may we not join in that sublime universal chorus of creation, recorded by the beloved apostle, "And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying: Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	*LIKE ONE OF THESE*	1
II.	*THE STARS AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*	18
III.	*GRAINS OF SAND*	30
IV.	*THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL* .	46
V.	*WEEDS*	62
VI.	*RAIN UPON THE MOWN GRASS* . .	80
VII.	*SUMMER BLOSSOMS*	97
VIII.	*MOUNTAIN SPRINGS*	117
IX.	*MOUNTAIN PEACE*	133
X.	*LEAVEN*	153
XI.	*MANNA AND CORN*	177
XII.	*THE AUTUMN FIRE*	190

CHAP.		PAGE
XIII.	*THE FRUIT-TREE AND THE CHAFF* .	203
XIV.	*AN APPLE*	213
XV.	*A CORN OF WHEAT*	230
XVI.	*THE WIDOW'S POT OF OIL* . . .	253
XVII.	*SNOW*	269
XVIII.	*THE PERMANENCE OF THE PAST* .	286
XIX.	*THE DAYS OF A TREE*	301
XX.	*WASTE*	328
XXI.	*THE SPECTRE OF THE OLD NATURE*	343

TWO WORLDS ARE OURS.

CHAPTER I.

LIKE ONE OF THESE.

"Like one of these."—ST. MATTHEW VI. 29.

OUR Lord was preaching on the slope of a hill in Galilee. It was the early spring, which in that delicious climate is a period of enchantment. The flowering season lasts only a few weeks; but the traveller who is fortunate enough to be in the Holy Land at the time sees the ground everywhere almost hid by a perfect blaze of crocuses, lilies and anemones; and these flowers impart form and colour to tracts of country that would otherwise be tame and monotonous. Upon such a blaze of brilliant flowers did the eye of Jesus rest. He not only admired their outward beauty but entered into their simple life, and rose through this vividness of sympathy to the spiritual meanings which they suggested. He saw not only their natural but also their religious side. To Him they were eloquent not only of Divine contrivance but also of human teaching. They were God's

revelation to man, brought nigh to his door, and expressed in the simplest and homeliest form.

We have in this a striking proof that Jesus was divine. His words are the only tender ones about flowers in all the Bible. There are many allusions to the sublime aspects and grand objects of nature—to the mountains and trees—but hardly anything is said of the lowly things that grow on the bosom of the one, and light up the shadow of the other. The grass and the flowers are commonly used as images of decay and transient glory ; and fruits are prized for their utility without a thought of the blossoms that preceded them ; and the fragrance that is alluded to is not that of the living rose or lily, or some humbler herb of the field, whose sweet odour is its sole charm, but the incense that dims the Holy Place, and the smell of the spices and ointments of the merchant. Even in the descriptions of heaven, we read only of the beauty of flashing gems, and see nothing of the soft living beauty of flowers. Golden streets invite the footsteps instead of a carpet of cowslips and buttercups ; and walls of sapphire, ruby, and emerald bound the splendour, instead of hill-sides green on their lower slopes with the early spring grass, and blue and crimson on the upper heights with the gleam of gentian, and the blush of Alp-rose. We behold indeed in the midst of the streets a tree of life with medicinal leaves, and twelve manner of fruits ; but we miss the flowers that have no purpose to serve but to delight the eye, and bring sweet thoughts to the mind by their beautiful idleness. All this of course is

necessary, for the ideas of heaven which the sacred writer wishes to impress upon our minds, in contrast with the passing scenes and objects of earth, are those of eternal endurance and complete satisfaction, which gems and fruits alone can symbolise. But while the glories of the golden streets and jewelled walls may be the most attractive features in the picture of the heavenly paradise to some minds, others will be drawn more by thoughts of the green pastures and fountains of living waters beside which the Lamb leads His flock. And such persons will feel a peculiar interest in the one little verse which gives us a profound insight into the tender heart of Jesus in regard to the gospel of nature, and tells us that He who loved the little children, loved their little unconscious playmates and counterparts, and virtually implied in His words that of these too is the kingdom of heaven.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." This is indeed an illuminated text. Every word in this allusion to the lilies of the field is itself a picture. But Jesus does not look with admiration and tenderness merely at the general aspect of the whole crimsoned field before His eye—at the common mass of blossoms; He singles out the individual flowers. He said that Solomon, who stood on the same spot and sang of the same flowers centuries before, but only in the lover's way, was not arrayed like *one of these*. What loving, special regard; what profound, far-reaching

significance, is there in that little phrase, "one of these!" I propose to isolate it from the rest of the verse, and use it as a text for a few meditations upon God's care for single individual things.

I think that there is particular need of such teaching at the present day. There is much in our modern life that tends to destroy individuality and to merge the separate existence of each person in that of the whole community. "The world," as one has quaintly remarked, "is so full of other folk." In our large cities and in the busy centres of human industry and enjoyment we are apt to be lost in the crowd. Individuals come unregarded and go unmissed. The thought of the teeming millions of the world's population oppresses us with a sense of personal insignificance, and renders it difficult for us to realise God's interest in the history of each human being. Science is teaching us that nature is careful only of the type and careless of the single life. Face to face with the immense spaces of the astronomer and the awful periods of the geologist, the old question forces itself upon us with tenfold more difficulty and sadness: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?" When gazing upon the everlasting hills and the untiring ocean, the stars in their courses and the seasons in their changes, and thinking of the vast forces and the vast orbits of the universe, we seem to ourselves to be but little unconsidered fragments of a tremendous material system. A remorseless Fate seems to plough its course steadily onwards, careless whether it is over senseless rocks or

breaking hearts—leaving us to struggle for our life as a man struggles in a stormy sea. The laws of nature as they are explained to us by our philosophers seem to allow no room for Divine thought and care in individual cases; and we are apt to be overpowered by the despairing idea of the calm indifference of the great Ruler of the Universe. Surely then it is a blessed Gospel which tells us that we are not inextricably buried in a shoreless, bottomless, sea of nature, but on the contrary are constant objects of solicitude to a personal God! And the measure in which we realise that He who made us is speaking to us in our own human language, and thinking of us not merely as present somewhere in His vast and total thought, but as known by name and nature—known, but in far higher degree, as we ourselves know each other, is the measure in which we realise our own individuality, rise to the full dignity of a human person, and are proof against all the pantheistic negations that perplex our times.

Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like *one* of these lilies of the field, said He who came in human form to reveal to us the unseen personal God, to bring near to us the distant living heaven, and to establish our wonderful individuality and value as creatures made in the image of God; and we all feel the deep truth of His words. There is no one who has not been lost in wonder at times at the individual beauty and perfection of the wild flowers, whose blossoming and fading, opening and closing, mark the passage of the seasons and the daily course of the sun in the heavens. We take up

at random any single plant from a whole meadowful, and we find that it is as complete in all its parts, and as admirably adapted for its purpose, as though it were the only object in the universe. And untold myriads of such flowers are born and die every year in lonely places where no human eye beholds them, and their sweetness seems to be wasted on the desert air. And not only is each plant thus superficially beautiful and perfect : the microscope brings out new loveliness and increases the wonder. The common daisy, which looks like a fairy creature to the eye of a child, appears to the scientific man in its composite arrangement of separate florets a marvel of construction and contrivance, fearfully and wonderfully made. You look at a bed of carnations, violets or roses, and you count it all as one variety ; but when you begin to examine and compare you find no two individual blossoms exactly alike; and you soon make the discovery that there are as many varieties as there are individual flowers. The most elaborate means are adopted to prevent self-fertilisation, which would make the progeny like the parent, and to effect cross-fertilisation, which introduces fresh varieties. The curious shapes, brilliant colours and wonderful structure of many flowers are produced by this cause, and show to us in the most striking way that God cares not merely for the race or the species, but for the individual : that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed, not merely like the whole field of lilies, but like *one of these*.

But Jesus brought forward God's care in clothing and tending the individual plant as an argument and illustra-

tion to prove His special care for human beings. He used it as we pluck a lily or a violet in a spot where some beautiful revelation of nature or some tender experience of the heart has been given to us, to hold the memory fast. Plants, although they have a greater individuality than mineral substances, are still bound up in the processes and forces of the physical world. They are merged in the dominion of nature; but man is not a thing but a person. The individualising process of God in nature is completed in him. He rises out of nature, above nature, and becomes the interpreter of nature. By some scientific men, indeed, man is sunk in the creation. According to them he is simply the copestone of the vast building, the highest link in the chain of organic life, owing his origin to the same physical laws which have formed the various species of plants and animals, and tracing his ancestry to some gelatinous jelly on the rocks of a primeval ocean. But even supposing this theory to be true, it can manifestly be true only of his physical part. He has a spiritual part whose origin cannot thus be accounted for. The fact that God made him in His own image, proves that he is not a creature among the mass of creatures, but a person standing out in full relief from creation; and that Divine impress is after all the real truth of humanity, which makes it of very little consequence what views may be entertained regarding man's physical descent. His body is the most perfectly appointed work of God, the most complete and vital unity in the material universe, summing up all the forms and forces of creation

in itself and stamping upon them the higher characters of a human soul, and thus linking the two worlds of matter and spirit, of heaven and earth together. He is endowed with a self-conscious intelligence which enables him to understand the works of God and to search out the secrets of the universe. His spirit possesses that freedom of will to choose the means and objects of life which alone makes goodness possible, which constitutes the true image of God, and in which the possibility of the incarnation is indicated. The creation exhibits to us the operation of the Divine attributes; but man possesses the attributes themselves. We see in God's works proofs of His love and wisdom and power; but man has love and power and wisdom in some measure akin to those of his Maker.

Man, being thus alone of all creatures the child of God, the whole history of the earth is the history of its preparation for him. In the storing of coal under the strata of the earth and the distribution of metallic ores in veins; in the formation of useful plants, cultivated fruits, cereal grains, domestic animals, which were among the last species introduced; in the gradual increase of the beauty of created things with the progress of time—the plumage of birds, the hues of insects, the songs of the woodlands, the delicate tints and perfumes of flowers, and the sculpturing of the surface of the earth into grander and lovelier scenery; in all these things we see how God has been providing for man's wants, and giving him the means of obtaining dominion over all nature. And if the peculiar dignity of man as compared

with the rest of creation gives this grand significance to geological history, it also makes the Scripture history of the regeneration of man, his moral and religious culture, reasonable and consistent. Where geological history ends Scripture history commences; and the unique position of man in creation is the key that explains Scripture history. If we believe, as we must do, that the origin of man is exceptional—that the chain of continuity in nature in his case has been broken—then we see the beautiful harmony between the scheme of grace and that fact. We see why God should come out from behind the veil of nature and reveal Himself in the modes and within the limits of human life, and break the silence of the heavens and speak to man by means of prophets, kings and godly men of old, and in the last days by the mouth of His own Son. The whole system of Divine Revelation rests upon the special creation of man. The scion of the incarnation is harmoniously grafted upon the stock of an exceptional being made in the image of God. In the origin of man something has come into the world which is not of it; a power which is above nature is brought into the order of nature. And all the after-interpositions of God in his behalf, all the laws and processes of grace, are in entire unison with the first interposition.

But not only does God treat the whole human race in this exceptional way, He also enters into personal relations with each human being. He knows us not in the mass only, but individually. He calls each human being by name, and leads him out from the

crowd and distinguishes him by special dealings. It is a wonderful thought, which we too often lose sight of, that not only is the human race a special creation of God, but each human being is also a special creation. Not only is man by himself an order which cannot be classified with any of the other orders of the animal kingdom, but each man is also a special order which cannot be classified with any other member of the human family. Each human being is a person differing from all other persons. There is an essential difference in all lives. There are no real doubles in the world; no such thing as identity in constitution and circumstances. Even the most thoughtless person cannot but be impressed at times with that great mystery of our being, our individual isolation from our fellow-creatures as from an all-surrounding universe. Much of our life indeed is bound up in the lives of others; but every soul has besides an individual life with an individual history. Each man is sent into the world to work out by his acts or words some particular truth which he alone possesses; and the inimitable speciality of each man's experience must present things to him in an aspect which can be exactly the same for no other. The "personal equation" must be taken into consideration in all our estimates of men as well as in determining the observations of astronomy.

And are we not thus shut out from our fellow-creatures in the seclusion of our individuality that we may be shut in more closely with God? Are we not constituted distinct persons, differing from all others, that God may

manifest Himself to each of us in another way than He does unto the world—that He may know us, love us, watch over us, and lead us individually, even as if calling us by name? If the unique character of man be the reason why God deals with him exceptionally, why He treats him differently from the rest of the creation, surely the fact that each human being is unique is a reason why God should deal with him specially and in accordance with his individual character and requirements. And this is just what the Christian religion teaches. This is the revelation which Jesus has given to us. One of the great uses of His incarnation is to manifest God in a human personality, that we might believe in that particular and personal love which he has towards us. He taught the inestimable value of each human soul, saying, "What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" He spoke the beautiful parable of the shepherd who left the ninety and nine sheep in the fold and went out into the wilderness in search of the one that had strayed; and He said that it is not the will of His Father that *one* of these little ones should perish. He did not allow the solitary woman who came up behind Him in the crowd to steal some healing virtue from the hem of His garment to go away in this impersonal, unrecognising way, but compelled her to show herself and confess her need, and sent her away with His personal blessing. He has made Himself known to us not only as the Redeemer of our common nature but also of our several persons. We can each of us say, in the words of the Apostle,

"He loved me and gave Himself for me." We are saved, not as some unknown person—a mere member of the community—but as the Mary, or John, or Peter, or Paul, or Antipas, whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life, engraved upon the palms of God's hands. And in the carrying out of this individual salvation of men, God does not fail in some form or other to present to every human soul the things that belong to its peace.

Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like *one of these*. The sun that shines upon the broad world lies in its little bosom, and moulds its soft texture and paints its bright hues. There is a wise meaning and a gracious design in every tint of its adornment and every curve of its grace. Each leaf is set in its own place by law; and the spot where each petal and stamen is to appear is predetermined by a covenant of nature ordered in all things and sure. Its symmetry is a type and proof of the Divine *justice*. Its shape indicates that it occupies only its own fair share of the world; it is limited by its form to what is best for it and for all other things around it. Its life is co-ordinated and keeps time with the sublime motions of the heavens, and its structure and uses are full of the profound teachings of the unsearchable God. And if God thus care for an individual flower, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will He care for an individual human being whom He has made in His own image, and upon whose life He has made such momentous issues to depend? The extinction of a lily would be only the loss of a fleeting

form of organic life—a mere presentation of a specific type, which is merged in nature and would disappear again in nature, as a bubble that rises on the surface of a stream vanishes again in its waters; but the extinction of a human life would be the loss of a person in whom individuality—separation from the all-pervading forces of nature—is completed, and who is thus severed from physical connection that he may enter into higher moral relations with other spirits and with God. And, therefore, as I am a special creation of God, whom He has made for communion with Himself, I believe that He cares for me as He cares for no one else; that He manifests Himself to me in a way that He manifests Himself to no one else; that I bring out certain qualities in His nature and administration which no one else brings out; and that I show forth His glory in a way that no other human being can do. I believe that every Christian sees and knows God and Christ in a different way from all other Christians; that according to individual character and attainments are the special revelations and experiences of grace; that the love which passeth knowledge and the fulness of God are conditioned by the capacity of each human soul, and constitute a special experience to each human being. "How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us and not unto the world?" "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." He gives to each a white stone and a new name, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

It is upon this ground of our individuality that we can rest most securely the efficacy of prayer. It may seem as if in this vast universe there were no place left for caring about the wishes or interests of any individual being in it; that God governs the whole for the benefit of the whole; that the laws of nature carry to their end, without any possibility of deviation or interruption, the intentions of God. But the fact that God enters into such personal relations with us, as we know that He has done, indicates that we must enter into personal relations with Him. His special communications to us must awaken corresponding responses in our heart. He can reconcile the true interest of every soul with the real good of the whole. Though He is ruling the world He has revealed Himself to us as our Father; and we must come to Him with our wants and sins and sorrows as little children, confident that our individual prayer has its own place and value in this great system of law and order, and that the Lord will hear it, as a father hears the prayers of a child, and grant us, if not the exact answer that we wish, the answer that we really need.

It is upon this ground also that the argument for immortality rests most securely. The immortality to which some look forward—the immortality of the matter of which our bodies is composed, or of the force which has produced our personal life, or of the race of which we are members—the individual perishing but the community surviving—or of the intellectual ideas or moral truths which we have originated or transmitted—such an

immortality would be worthless. We can feel no interest in a destiny so abstract, so impersonal. We do not want to be absorbed and lost in the matter, or the force, or the truth of the world, or even in the unfathomed depths of universal being, like a drop in the ocean; we want to be ourselves throughout eternity. And such an immortality is opened up to us by Jesus Christ, who in death proved Himself to be stronger than death. Because He lives we shall live also. This argument when heaven grows dim to eyes full of tears, and faith seeks to shape out in the awful void "the image of its everlasting dower," is supported by the voiceless unconfuted lips of the flowers which we place by the bedside of the dying and on the grave of the dead. To the thoughtful mind the lily blossom is a wicket in the great unseen portal of death, through which we may obtain bright glimpses of what is beyond. It opens in all its snowy purity and exquisite grace from the dry withered sheath, as the transfigured immortal life bursts from the temporary imprisonment of death. Who would have thought that such a glorious revelation lay hid in the unsightly bulb buried in the dark earth! And if the death of the plant should thus blossom into undreamt-of beauty, what infinite possibilities, better than our brightest hopes are held by that darkness which bounds our vision here. He who raises up the lilies every summer, each from its own root in the mould, will not leave our life in the dust. "Like one of these," our death will be but a blossoming into a higher life.

As nature protests continually against uniformity, and by a thousand analogies insists upon the supreme importance of the individual, so the Christian religion is a grand continual protest against the spirit of the world and the Pharisaism of the Church, which tend to reduce all alike to one dull uniform pattern, and to construct one type of Christian experience and Christian work which all must follow. It proclaims and insures the distinct life and originality and preciousness of each man, and claims all human interests for its domain and all human faculties for its instruments; and thus produces a variety as great in the field of grace as in the field of nature. It teaches us to esteem others better than ourselves for the sake of the special gifts and graces which they possess and of which we are destitute. It is by the qualities in which we differ from others that we influence them most, and not by the qualities in which we resemble them. Each human being is separated from the rest of the world and from the rest of his kind—is specially endowed and specially circumstanced and specially ministered to—in order first that he may enter into living personal union with the Lord Jesus, in whom alone he is complete—that he may lose his lower sinful perishing life, and gain a higher and more enduring individuality in Christ Jesus. And he is thus united to Christ and made individually nobler—not that he may be isolated from his race and confine to himself the richness of his experience and the blessedness of his life in Christ, but that he may be a centre of usefulness to others. Each individual Christian life

is inestimably precious, because it can contribute its distinct share to the manifold richness of the whole sum of Christian life. Each of us can contribute to the highest well-being of humanity—to the glory of God and the joy of Christ what no other human being can supply; and if we withhold this personal contribution the loss can never be made up.

CHAPTER II.

THE STARS AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years."—GENESIS I. 14.

A LITTLE insignificant insect, that hides in the darkest corners of our houses and in the most obscure nooks in the fields, furnishes the astronomer with a measuring line by which the august motions of the orbs of heaven may be determined. By the slender threads of a spider's web, stretched at equal distances across the glass of the transit instrument in the Royal Observatory, the exact instant at which stars and planets pass south or north of Greenwich is noted, and the chronometer of every vessel in our seaports about to proceed on a distant voyage is regulated. By observations of the heavenly bodies, taken by aid of such chronometers, mariners can ascertain with perfect accuracy the latitude and longitude of their ships in the loneliest parts of the ocean. Every vessel that sails upon the high seas is thus as much indebted for its safety to

the delicate web woven by some spider between two clover-leaves, for certain purposes of its own, as it is to the sails and cordage by which the breeze propels it over the waters.

Our human tasks, that appear insect-like to higher intelligences, are also correlated with the stars of heaven. Wrought in obscure corners, and in humble walks of life, they mark the transit of the heavenly bodies, and are timed to the motion of the spheres. Across the webs woven by the toil and expenditure of brain and muscle, the sun, moon, and stars pass, to be to us for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

But not for secular purposes alone are these divisions of time marked out for us by the heavenly bodies; they have a still higher and more important purpose to serve in connection with our spiritual life. Man does not live by bread alone; nothing was made by God for a mere temporary or physical use. Everything in God's universe exists, not for its own sake merely, but for the sake of something higher than itself. For the immortal education of souls—as their grandest use—the visible heavens and earth were made. This lower creation is but a scaffolding for the erection of the spiritual temple of the heirs of glory. What a grand thought it is, that the whole mass of the earth, from pole to pole, and from centre to circumference, has been weighed in the balance, in order that a snowdrop may hang its fragile blossom on its stem, in the right way to produce and ripen its seed! But it is a thought grander still, that the stars in their courses fought against Sisera; that the sun and moon

stood still over the valley of Ajalon, in order that Israel might have light to fight the battle of the Lord; that the whole material universe is subordinated to, and even sacrificed for, the spiritual welfare of those heirs of salvation to whom the very angels are ministering spirits. Just as the spider's thread serves to catch a fly and mark the transit of a star; just as the silky web beaded with morning dew, that glitters on the lawn, is correlated with the canvas sheet, wet with the spray of the storm, that spreads to the gale in mid ocean; so the grand unity of design which binds together every law and substance of the visible universe, links the stars of heaven with the spiritual condition of man, and makes of them signs by which his spiritual life may be regulated.

The revolution of the earth on its axis marks off for us the period of a day; the changes of the moon divide for us our month; and the motion of the earth round the sun determines our year. But the period of time which we call a week has no such origin. It is marked out, not by the passage of any star or the revolution of any heavenly body. It is of special divine appointment. It is caused by the Sun of Righteousness alone; it is indicated by the transit of the Star that arose out of Jacob across the dark line of death—across the boundary between this world and the next, in resurrection glory. It is the gnomon of eternity, the shadow of God's Throne, that separates the first day of the week from all other days, and consecrates it to the service of God and the highest well-being of man. The Lord's Day

is the representative day—the representative period of time, which determines the character of all the other periods, and is given to us to prepare for eternity. It is like the middle stem of the seven-branched candlestick, which sheds its centre light upon the other six lamps; for it is consistent with the experience of every one, that as the first day has been spent so the whole week has generally turned out.

Emerson strikingly says, that "This age has yoked its waggon to a star." It makes use of the great forces of the universe in its daily work; harnesses the power of steam to its machinery; paints its portraits by the light of the sun; and sends its messages to the ends of the earth on the back of the lightning. What a lesson should this teach us in spiritual things! If we navigate our ships by the light of the stars; if we carry on our correspondence by the lightning of heaven; should we condescend in the sphere of the soul to the use of things that are relatively lower? Not by the vain appearances of earth, but by the glorious revelations of eternity, should we live; not at the things seen and temporal, but at the things unseen and eternal, should we look; not by sight, but by faith, should we walk; not in man, whose breath is in his nostrils, but in the Lord Almighty should we trust; not in ourselves should we look for the ground of salvation, but to the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; not under the power of this world should we live, but under the powers of the world to come. If we are new creatures in Christ Jesus; if the Spirit has brought light out of our darkness, and order

out of our confusion, and life out of our death; then over our new creation the morning stars sing together and the sons of God shout for joy. Naturally we are the creatures of days and months and years that vanish, regulated by sun and moon and stars that will perish. But, born anew in Christ, we enter into a sphere where time has no existence, where one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day; we lay hold on eternal life. As kings and priests unto God—kings over circumstances, and priests yielding ourselves a living sacrifice, let us walk worthy of our high vocation, and reign and serve on the earth.

I. The lights which God hath set in the firmament break up the monotony of life. There is something peculiarly irksome in uniformity. A long straight road without a turn is very trying to the person who has to traverse it. He sees it all before him; there is nothing to divert his attention or excite his hope; he anticipates no surprise, no new experience. He walks it twice, first with his eyes and then with his feet, and this double walking is dreary and fatiguing. Like this straight road would be our life, were it not for the alternations of day and night and the changes of the seasons. The orbs of heaven introduce curves and turning-points into the path of life, which relieve its monotony and impart interest and variety to it. Life is not a continuous drudgery, a going on wearily in a perpetual straight line; but a constant ending and beginning. We do not see all the road of life before us; the bends of its days and months and years hide the future from our view,

and allure us on with new hopes and fresh expectations, until at last we come without fatigue to the end of the journey.

II. The lights which God hath set in the firmament divide our life into separate and manageable portions. Just as the horizon takes out of the great globe a landscape which does not bewilder us with its vastness, but spreads around our home and sphere of labour a sufficient variety of scenery and objects to draw out and exercise our faculties of mind and body; so the horizon of each day, or week, or month, or year takes out of our whole existence a part, which enables us most efficiently to transact on its stage the business, and carry on the relations of life. We have to deal, not with the whole of life, but with small portions of it, as they are measured out to us one by one. And thus, by the limitation of our view and the narrowing of our range of action, our attention is acuminated upon the objects that are close at hand, and upon the duties and responsibilities of the present moment. Sufficient to each day is the evil thereof. Each day brings its own work and its own rest. Each particular object is brought forward from the dim perspective of the rational horizon and bulks largely in the foreground of the sensible horizon. The little things that would have been eclipsed if seen only as parts of a great whole, are seen prominently by themselves, and become invested with special importance. We are more deeply impressed with the magnitude of our faults when we look back upon them at the close of each day, than when we review them at the end

of a year; and we are more encouraged to do our work when we look forward to it on the morning of each day, than when we survey it from the commencement of a whole week or month.

III. The lights which God hath set in the firmament enable us to *redeem* the time; to retrieve the mis-spent past by the right improvement of the present. No more, indeed, does God do for us as He did for Hezekiah of old: "Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down on the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down." But in a certain representative sense He brings back for us the days that are fled and the years that are no more. Each day is a miniature of the whole of life and of all the seasons of the year. Morning answers to spring; mid-day to summer; afternoon to autumn; and evening to winter. We are children in the morning, with their fresh feelings and hopes; we are grown-up men and women, with all their sober and sad experiences, at noon; we are aged persons, with whom the possibilities of life are over, in the afternoon and night. And this representative relation of each day to the whole of life, gives us daily-recurring opportunities of living over again the past, and repairing its wastes and mending its evils. Each morning we get our youth back again; each day we get our whole life back again; in the relation in which a miniature copy stands to the full-sized portrait, or the small central part of the revolving wheel to its wide circumference. And in this way

we have an opportunity of doing on the small scale and narrow stage of a single day what we ought to have done on the larger field of our whole previous existence.

IV. The lights which God hath set in the firmament enable us to set out on a new course from some marked and memorable point. The horizon of each day, each week, each month, each year, comes down and closes around us with all its painful recollections and habits and associations of evil, and a new horizon opens up with new opportunities and fresh hopes; and this closing and opening of each marked period of our life says to us emphatically, "Let the dead past bury its dead;" "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." We are to gather out of the past all its wise lessons for the future, and to forget all the rest, for "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." God is giving to us with every new horizon of life a sense of recovered freedom, separating us from past painful experiences, and enabling us to begin a new course of life on a higher plane. And with this division of time by the orbs of Heaven—this arrangement of days and months and years, with their perpetually recurring new opportunities of living no more unto ourselves but unto God—coincide the nature and design of the blessed Gospel, whose unique peculiarity is, that it is the cancelling of debts that could never be paid, the assurance that our relations to God are entirely changed,

and all old things are passed away, and all things become new. It is this association that gives such importance to anniversaries, birthdays, and new years' days —seasons considered peculiarly auspicious for commencing life afresh, and which are generally taken advantage of to form new resolutions.

It has been noticed in our observatories, that, between the *real* passage of a star across the spider's thread of a meridian telescope and the estimation of its passage by the observer, an interval of time occurs which varies with different individuals, and with the same individual in summer and winter, and in different conditions of body. It is the duty of the astronomer to record the passage of the star the instant it occurs; but it has been found that when there are two or three assistants who take their turn at the instrument, there is a constant discrepancy between their observations. One notices and records the passage sooner than another; the difference in some cases being more than a second. This difference, arising from the different rate of speed with which an impression from without travels along the nervous system of different individuals, is called by astronomers *the personal equation;* and allowance has to be always made for it in the extremely delicate and minute observations of astronomy. A similar discrepancy may be noticed between the impressions produced upon different individuals by the transit of the seasons, by the passage of life across the viewless boundary of a new day, a new week, or a new year. The personal equation must be taken into account in the

spiritual as in the scientific world. Some are more easily and deeply impressed by the flight of the years than others.

God is setting His signs in the heavens that we may pause and reflect upon their solemn significance. And just as the seaman afar upon the trackless ocean takes an observation with his instrument of the orbs of the sky, in order to ascertain his latitude and longitude, that he may steer safely to his destination; so we are warned to discern the face of the sky, to examine by the lights which God hath put in the firmament our position relatively to the country for which we are bound. It is for our salvation that sun, moon, and stars were ordained; that the world was made; that the Son of God died. Are we living insensible to the gracious calls addressed to us by the creation which was brought into existence for redemptive purposes, by Him without Whom was not anything made that was made? Is it in vain for our higher well-being that God has placed His lights in the firmament to be for signs and for seasons and for days and for years? If so, the stars in their courses will fight against us as they fought against Sisera. The whole economy of nature leaves him without excuse who neglects so great salvation.

It is beautiful to observe how the motions of the stars of heaven in their orbits, are represented by the flowers of earth in their opening and closing, in their blossoming and fading. The clock of time has two faces: the one above, on which the hours are marked by the rising and setting of the orbs of heaven; the other below, on

which the hours are marked by the blossoming and the fading, the opening and the closing of the flowers. The one exactly corresponds with the other. The movements of the living creatures depend upon the movements of the lifeless stars. The daisy follows with its golden eye the path of the sun through the sky, opens its blossom when he rises, and closes it when he sets. Thus should it be with our souls. There should be a similar harmony between them and the motions of the heavenly bodies which God has set in the firmament for signs to us. Our spiritual life should progress with their revolutions; should keep time with the music of the spheres; our thoughts should be widened with the process of the suns. This is the true astrology. And as the daisy follows the sun all day to the west with its open eye, and acknowledges no other light that falls upon it—lamplight, moonlight, or starlight—remaining closed under them all, except under the light of the sun; so should we follow the Sun of Righteousness whithersoever He goeth, and say with the Psalmist, "Whom have we in the heavens but Thee; and there is none upon the earth whom we desire besides Thee." And so doing, the times and the seasons will work together for our good; each day and week and year will find us further advanced in the shining path of the just; and at last, when we are parted from the presence of seasons and years as we know them now, it will be to find that they were but the weak, shadowy representations of spiritual states that abide for ever. The sun, moon, and stars are but dim lamps at the outer gates of

our Father's many mansions above, to guide us home; and when the everlasting day breaks and the shadows flee away, the sun shall be no more our light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto us, but the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and our God our glory.

CHAPTER III.

GRAINS OF SAND.

"And God gave Solomon largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore."—1 KINGS IV. 29.

THE image in which God's response to Solomon's prayer is conveyed is one whose full significance is apt to evade us on a mere superficial reading. It is a favourite metaphor with Eastern writers. There are numerous examples of its use in the Bible. In these examples it indicates vast quantity. The seed of Abraham was to be multiplied as the sand upon the sea-shore; Joseph gathered corn in Egypt as the sand of the sea; Job spoke of multiplying his days as the sand; and the Psalmist acknowledged that the thoughts of God to him were more in number than the sand. The image is very expressive. On the coast both of Palestine and Egypt—the regions with which the Bible writers were most familiar—the sand is unusually abundant. All the way from the Delta of the Nile to the most northern point of Syria, a vast sandy tract, penetrating inland here and there from the shore line,

fringes the Mediterranean, and separates between the green cultivated fields and the blue waters of the sea. The floor of the desert, which encompasses the Holy Land on the south and east, although usually composed of other materials, has nevertheless in a few places large belts of deep sand-drifts, like those which may be seen on the western bank of the Nile. Let the traveller stand on the sea-shore near Gaza, where, far as the eye can reach north and south, the tawny sand-hills swell and shoal as if imitating the rolling of the waves, down to the white ermine of the ocean verge; or let him be overtaken by a sand-storm in the Egyptian desert, in which the surging sand-clouds, with the red sun-light flashing like flame from the particles, suggest the idea of a whole continent on fire, with its smoke ascending in stifling immeasurable masses to heaven; and a most vivid impression of the vastness of the quantity of this material will be produced upon his mind. Let him take up a handful of the sand and try to count its grains as they trickle through his fingers, and he will give up the task in despair ere he has counted a twentieth part. Let him try to imagine how many handfuls there are in even one heap beside him, and his imagination will be speedily overpowered. And if he endeavours further to form some conception of the quantity that makes up the shore of a single bay, or the floor of a single desert, the mind utterly collapses under the unequal burden. Such, then, is the image which the inspired writer, in accommodation to the Eastern hyperbolical mode of speaking, employs to express the

largeness of heart with which Solomon was endowed. Such is the literal and obvious meaning of the allusion.

But it seems to me, in analysing it more closely, that the image indicates not only the vast but also the *varied* range of Solomon's wisdom; not only the quantity but also the *quality* of the largeness of his heart. Nothing, at first sight, looks more uniform and monotonous than a heap of sand. It seems barren and uninteresting to the last degree. A sandy desert or sea-shore in itself seems the most dreary and desolate of all places, where there is nothing to excite the mind or appeal to the imagination; and yet examine carefully a small portion of the sand, and you will be struck with the immense variety which it contains. No two particles are the same in size, shape, colour, or mineral character. No two grains have perhaps the same origin or the same history. A handful of sand is, in fact, a geological museum, composed of the remains of different rocks worn off or ground down by different agencies and at different periods. What a boundless field for the imagination does it afford! To trace the regions in which, and the methods by which, the separate particles of a handful taken from the shore of Palestine were formed would be an endless task. One grain has come from the granite rocks that almost throttle the Nile at the first cataract, out of which the earliest monuments of Egypt were carved; perhaps has itself formed part of some statue or obelisk that was old before history began. Another grain has been ground down from the marble hills of Greece that have yielded the precious material

in which, by the sculptor's skill, the gods have come down to the earth in the likeness of men. A third has been disintegrated from the volcanic stone which the earliest builders of Italy have piled into their gigantic walls and massive tombs. Some of the particles have been washed down by streams from the precipices of the Alps or Apennines; others have been carried by the wind from the eruptions of Vesuvius and Etna; and others still have been ground from the dark northern headlands, those Sphinxes of the ocean against which the waves of the Atlantic — fugitives, all white and reeking, flying from some monster of the deep—hurl themselves with frantic fear. Frost and fire, glacier on mountain crest, and iceberg on Arctic shore; cataract roaring in rocky gorge, thrilling the leaves with fear, and river flowing calmly through rich alluvial plain; breaker foaming on iron coast, and still lake lisping its liquid murmurs on pebbly beach; all these have been at work for untold ages to produce the individual grains of the handful of sand. Flakes of gold from eastern mines; scales of glittering mica from western hills; fragments of quartz, and onyx, and jasper from southern ranges mingle with the duller *débris* of common rocks. And interspersed among these lifeless particles may often be seen beautiful forms of microscopic life, minute hyaline shells, crystal spicules of sponges, and tinted bits of sea-urchins, the faint dawning of a higher world in sea and shore. We read in these sand-dunes, as distinctly as we see the tracks of ancient animals on the surface of sandstone slabs taken from the quarry, the

evidence of many of the changes through which our earth has passed. We see in them the relics of old continents that have vanished completely — the sole memorials of ancient seas that seem mythical to all but the geologist. They are formed from the ruin of rocks, which themselves were made of ancient sea-shores and ocean-beds ; the sandstone rock alternately crumbling into sand and hardening into rock, to be again disintegrated into sand, as sea and land alternately give place to each other. The earth is but a gigantic sand-glass for the computation of geological time, in which the sands are falling unremittingly ; and which after long ages is turned upside down to expend what it has gained, and to gain what it has expended. And no one with a thoughtful mind can gaze upon the minute grains that thus come and go without being overwhelmed by their significance, by the thought of the vast periods which they represent and the stupendous cosmical processes which have given rise to then. So far from finding the sand upon the sea-shore monotonous and uninteresting, it is full, when properly studied, of the romance of natural history.

Like this sand on the sea-shore, in its wonderful variety, was the largeness of heart which God bestowed upon Solomon ; a largeness of heart which would find, even in things as unpromising and barren at first sight as a heap of sand, abundance of interest and enjoyment ; a largeness of heart which would invest with its own charm the most desert place and the most familiar object—to which nothing that God had made would be

common or unclean. Throughout the life of Solomon we see how richly he possessed this Divine gift; how wide was his culture—how deep was his interest in the world around him. He took cognisance not only of the objects of nature, animate and inanimate, which existed in his own kingdom, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grew out of the wall, and of those which the commercial enterprises of his subjects were continually bringing in from foreign lands, but also of the lives and characters of men in all their surface diversities and in all their inner depths. He displayed the most consummate ability in organising and administering the affairs of his extensive kingdom. He searched with a keen intellect all the ever old, ever new problems of life which were stirring the minds and vexing the hearts of the most throughtful men of his day. He had an imagination which played gracefully around the light and airy subjects which occupy men's moments of leisure, and a tender, passionate nature, which gave its own strong colouring to every affection of his heart. We have the most ample proofs of his profound practical sagacity in the Book of Proverbs, which he edited; of his tenderness and devotion in the Song of Solomon, which he composed; and of his vast and varied experience of all that the world can do for, or give to, a man in the inexpressibly sad chapters of Ecclesiastes, which, amid the sunny joyousness of the other books of the Bible, seems like the skeleton at the Egyptian feast. The historians of Israel delighted to dwell upon the confession of the Queen of Sheba that

the reality of his greatness surpassed the fame thereof —that one-half had not been told her. And ever since, fantastic fables, Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan, have surrounded him with a halo of supernatural wisdom, and have attributed to him the power of interpreting the speech of beasts and birds, of knowing the secret virtues of gems and herbs, and of curing diseases and casting out devils by magic spells and incantations.

God is willing to grant to every human being, in a degree proportioned to his nature and circumstances, what he bestowed upon Solomon. He has placed us in a large and wealthy place. He has given to us the whole creation for our inheritance, and made us the heirs of all the ages. The whole universe tends towards man as its centre and highest point. It finds in him its end and interpreter. Nature is translated in his mind into thought. All the sciences are only the humanising of the things of earth. We name and classify and study plants, and animals, and stones, and thus give our own life to them, and raise them by this association into fit companions for ourselves. The uses of the objects of nature are only their human relations. And all this is because God made the earth to be co-ordinate with man, and in its own degree humane. And just as He feeds our bodies with the treasures of every land and every sea, that we may have a wide and vigorous life, participant of all variety; so He wishes to feed our souls with intellectual food derived from all the objects which He has made, that we may interpret the mute symbolism of earth and sea and sky, and offer in rational conscious

form, as the priests of creation, the silent, unconscious worship of nature. But, alas! how grievously have we frustrated God's gracious design! How insensible are we to many of the relations and attractions of the world around us! How narrow is the region of interest in which we live! How few are the things for which we really care! A Roman noble, speaking to a great crowd of his fellow-citizens on the Palatine Hill in Rome, once said, "Nothing human is foreign to me." The sentiment was warmly applauded by the multitude; but only a few choice spirits have ever been able to carry it out in all its significance. A life spent in the pursuit of wealth, or pleasure, or comfort, or self-interest, like a narrow window, frames and circumscribes the wide view. Sin, that promises a glorious god-like enlargement of being, contracts the world of nature and the world of thought, lays waste all the sources of enjoyment without, and paralyses all the powers of enjoyment within. And in a world where everything that God has made is very good, and is fitted to please and instruct us, so many things become commonplace and uninteresting to us because we ourselves have lost the capacity to appreciate them. The world is full of life and beauty and interest, but we have lost our vitality; our life is mixed with death; and therefore the world is to us too often a mere heap of barren sand.

And the most woeful thing of all is that that religion which was given to us by God for the very purpose of enlarging our heart and enlarging the sphere of interest and enjoyment around us, for opening our eyes and bringing

back the fresh charm of God's world, is perverted by us into a kind of moral imprisonment. That which was meant to throw wide open the gates of our spirit to the fulness of the Divine blessing—to banish our fear to live at large in God's great world—has, in too many instances, led to greater self-centredness and narrowness of view than before. How mean and low are the ideas which many people have of religion! They are afraid to open their mouths wide that they may be filled abundantly. They cannot believe in a disinterested goodness, which in the most absolute and unlimited sense finds it more blessed to give than to receive. They gauge the bounty of God by the narrow standard of their own selfish, grudging hearts. How many well-meaning Christians ignore altogether the work of their Father's hands; are content to know nothing of the Older Testament of nature which He has given for the very purpose of illustrating the lessons of grace, and ministering pleasure and instruction to them! They glory in closing their eyes to the beauties of sea, and sky, and land, as if in their very nature calculated to draw down their thoughts from heavenly to earthly things. How many reduce the field of sacred knowledge and experience to those things only which they deem necessary to salvation! In their estimation salvation begins and ends with the conviction that we are pardoned sinners; and all beyond that is not only vain and useless, but positively mischievous. Perverting the meaning of the singleness of eye and heart which the followers of Christ must

possess, of the one thing needful for which everything else must be given up, they fancy that the Christian religion is a scheme only of self-denial and self-sacrifice—limiting the range of enjoyment and circumscribing the use of the things of the world. They think that God is most acceptably served by austerities and mortifications, which in themselves are pleasing to Him. The love of God is so conceived of by them as if it must exclude every other affection; and the service of God as the proscription of half the faculties and sensibilities of our nature; and the Christian life as a life that exclusively meditates upon and prepares for heaven, and is indifferent to all the common interests of this world.

All this is but a caricature of the gospel. These are the characteristics, not of Christianity, which gives expansion to the soul, but of a false religion which absorbs it. The salvation of Christ Jesus is not, as it has been well said, an object which attracts the whole attention to itself, and renders it insensible to everything else, but the moral health of our being which imparts its own freshness to every scene, and its own charm to every object. It gives a disengagedness of mind which enables us to take an interest in the passing occurrences of the moment, and a disposableness of mind which fits us to take part in any duty that arises. Where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty. If the Son makes us free, we are free indeed. The love of God excludes none of the common duties and affections of life, but, on the contrary, gives them a new beauty and power;

just as the light of day communicates its own warm glow to everything in the landscape, from a mountain to a moss, while it displaces nothing to make room for itself. It alone gives us the full free use of our own being and of the world around us. It sets free the heart from its preoccupation with itself to run in the way of God's commandments. So far from throwing the common features of our daily life into shade, it brings forth to view objects before unnoticed, and attaches importance to things so small that in the confusion and self-absorption of a godless life they are altogether overlooked. And just as the reflection of the sky on a little wayside pool broadens its surface and deepens its capacity until it can take in the whole heavens above it, so the love of God in Christ shed abroad in our hearts will enlarge their capacity to embrace the whole universe. Partaking of God's nature we shall love all that God loves, and be interested in all in which He is interested.

As the sand is formed on the sea-shore, so is the enlargement of heart, which is said to resemble it, acquired. Not in the quiet sheltered waters of the bay, by gentle processes, is the sand deposited. It speaks of storm, of waste, and change. Its gain has come through loss. The sandy shore that fringes the ocean has been produced by the ruin of mountains. On far inland heights the storm and the glacier have been busy wearing down the precipices; on the ocean verge the mammoth-chested rocks have been tunnelled by the tides, and the tempest-vexed waves have carried the

materials thus formed, and accumulated them on the distant strand. The cascade we see foaming between its grim walls bears away, in the apparently useless struggle and waste of power, atoms from the rocks to swell the heap of sand upon the shore and sow the seed of continents yet to be. And so are all the gains of the soul made, through the abrasion of the hard and stony heart by the waves of time and change, by the wearing down of lofty imaginations through disappointments and failures, by the crumbling of proud desires through the humbling experiences of life. The sorrow or suffering that seems so useless and vain, contending with the hard rocky cause of it, fretting and fuming among the trying restraints of life, is, as it were, removing from them lessons of faith, and patience, and love, which afterwards, when the sorrow has subsided and the suffering has become tranquil, will enrich and beautify the whole life. So is it with all enlargements both in the natural and human worlds; the increase in one direction is the result of decrease in another, as the sea-shore acquires its sand by a process of continental disintegration. God's chastisements, which seem to limit our joys and to make our life poorer and meaner, are in reality designed to enlarge our hearts and to widen the bounds of our being. Through the pains and privations of our sufferings He leads us to a larger freedom, a greater power, a deeper joy. The Church has grown to the ideal of Christianity through persecutions and trials—has enlarged its boundaries and purified and widened its faith in the crises through

which it has passed. Kingdoms have grown greater and nobler through a stormy history. Nations have learned through wars and revolutions to take wider and truer views of their mission, and to fulfil the purposes of their existence in the confederation of mankind. Through the captivity into heathen lands the Israelites realised that in them all the families of the earth were destined to be blessed. Through the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the peculiar people, the narrow Jewish religion and polity merged into the world-wide, time-long kingdom of the Son of Man. And so, throughout the history of Christendom, we find that communities tempted selfishly to confine to themselves their special blessings have been compelled, by external shocks and internal sufferings, to enlarge their bounds and make others partakers with them of their privileges. New ages of larger liberty, of wider vision, of purer faith, of more just and loving relationships between man and man, have been ushered in through periods of terror and pain! The hearts of men everywhere have been enlarged through their fears; and the storms and strifes of the world have been the pains of progress —the birth-pangs of grander liberties. The framework of society, like the framework of nature, is broken up from time to time, that out of the wreck may be formed the shore-line that limits the encroachments of evil, and the dry land of truth that lifts the level of life nearer heaven.

The sand on the sea-shore is composed of small particles. It is vast in the aggregate, but the grains are

individually minute; and so the largeness of heart, which resembles it, is made up of the fulfilment of little duties and the adorning of little occasions as they arise. The work of creation was wrought out of finished atoms; the work of redemption was perfected by our Lord's attention to the humblest details and the commonest incidents—by obedience to the least of God's commandments; and so the Christian's life is a constant living to God in small things. The largeness of the Christian's heart is shown, not only by the comprehensiveness of its range of regard, but also by the minuteness of its interests and sympathies. His piety is proved, not by his conduct on great and exciting occasions, but by his conduct in ordinary circumstances; not by some great gift, or sacrifice, or act of devotion, but by a circumstantial attention to the common affairs of life. It requires less grace in reality to be a martyr for Christ on a public stage than to be kind and considerate in the familiar intercourse of domestic life, or to maintain a guileless integrity in the ordinary transactions of business. The Christianity that is faithful in that which is least is a more difficult Christianity than that which glows and triumphs on grand occasions. Little love can perform great actions; but it requires great love to present like little children small offerings—and to devote every moment and task of our life to God. A largeness of heart which thus attends to the smallest details of piety —to the little things in which love most powerfully shows itself, which recognises God habitually and seeks constant opportunities to please Him, will never be

oppressed with listlessness and ennui. Every hour will be filled with incident; every object will possess a secret charm; and life will be a continual feast. And just as the sand, by reason of the minuteness of its particles, forms the most effectual barrier to the waves of the ocean, and guards the land from their ravages, so the opulent heart that resembles it in its vast variety of interests and sympathies, will thus be most securely guarded against the storms of temptation and the bitter evils of the world.

Such is the largeness of heart that we all need. Our constant prayer should be that God would quicken our souls that cleave to the dust, that He would take us out of the straits in which we have entangled ourselves by our sin, and translate us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Without this enlargement of heart we cannot appreciate the broad wide world of God's salvation. Without an enlargement of heart to place us, as it were, on higher ground, from whence our view can take in more and more of God's universe, our life will be centred in the mere spark that animates the body. We need that the grace of God should do for our hearts what the microscope does for our eyes—enlarging our vision so as to see new beauty and wonder in the most familiar objects. We feel instinctively that something is wanting, not in outward objects, but in ourselves, to realise the full enjoyment of this fair creation for which God made us. We have had moments when we obtained fleeting glimpses of this joy. Let the heart be warmed by a new affection; let the

mind be quickened by a new experience; let the bounds of our being be enlarged by the passing away of some old trouble, or the dawn of some new revelation, and then all old things become new to us. A heap of sand becomes a heap of jewels. We have all felt the change which the same scene and the same objects undergo in different circumstances and different states of feeling. A dreary moorland that in a listless mood of mind presents nothing to interest or attract, becomes invested with a wonderful charm when seen in the transforming glow of some radiant feeling. The difference is not in the scene: that remains the same; it is in ourselves. It is in our own eye that has been opened and in our own heart that has been enlarged. The beauty and interest that we find in external objects must first exist in our own souls. We may travel from Dan to Beersheba in an idle straitened state of mind and find all barren; while in another state of mind, quickened and enlarged by the grace of God and the love of man, a walk along a narrow strip of sandy shore, with only the blue sky above and the calm sea before, seems like treading the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.

"The stone shall cry out of the wall."—HAB. II. 11.

VERY startling was the vision which appeared to Belshazzar and his courtiers when their feasting and mirth were at their height. On the walls of the Babylonian palace, the fingers of a man's hand were seen writing mystic letters. These letters were distinctly visible—illumined by the light of the seven-branched golden candlestick, taken from its sacred shrine in Jerusalem, and employed with the other Jewish regalia to dignify this pagan revel—but they were in an unknown tongue, and none of the wise men in the kingdom could interpret them. Only one man possessed the key that unlocked the supernatural cipher; and to the awe-struck monarch the Hebrew captive read the words of doom, in its "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."

But not in terrible omens and supernatural visions alone do we see the Divine handwriting. To thoughtful men on every wall by the wayside appear mystic letters

of profound significance. The Hand itself is unseen behind the veil of nature; we cannot catch the fingers in the act of tracing the characters; and the light by which we behold them is only the common light of day. But the words are, nevertheless, formed clear and distinct upon the stones of the wall, and they remain as if graven with a pen of iron. Botanists are familiar with a peculiar genus of lichen called Opegrapha, from the resemblance which the fructification of all its species bears to written characters. On the surface, which is a thin white tartareous film, closely adhering to the stone or to the bark of a tree, bordered by a line of black like a sheet of mourning paper, are numerous dark intricate lines, like Arabic, Hebrew, or Chinese letters. The likeness in some instances is remarkably close; and it would not be difficult to pick out combinations of lines which by a very little stretch of fancy might be identified by a scholar as the words and letters of an Oriental language. Nature has thus mimicked in almost every wood, and on almost every rock and wall, the latest and highest result of man's civilisation; and in her humblest plant-forms has written her wonderful runes. But though it can be literally said of only one genus that it imitates the handwriting of man, it can be said in the highest sense of the whole family of lichens that they are God's handwriting on the wall. We have in these lowly plants—so lowly that most people overlook them altogether, and the few who do give them a moment's notice regard them as weather-stains or purposeless discolorations without any form or comeliness—the certificate

of the hand of God, as truly as in the noblest trees of the forest and the loveliest flowers of the field. He has written His own signature on these minute and unregarded pages of nature by signs and ciphers which those who have made a special study of this department of God's works—the prophets and interpreters of nature's "open secret"—can read as easily as Daniel read the mystic letters on the palace-wall of Babylon. How small a key opens the great gate of the Temple of the Universe! By the study of a lichen or a moss we can understand more clearly the mystery of the world. With this magic "sesame" we enter the kingdom of life and inherit its vast treasures.

Let us try and spell out a few of the most obvious lessons contained in the Divine epistles written on every wayside wall, so that he who runs may read. Lichens form the nebulæ, so to speak, of the firmament of life. The mystery which distance gives to the stars that appear on the remotest verge of space, the extreme simplicity of their structure gives to these plants. That faint grey organic film which spreads in a circular shape over a stone, seems more like the nebular mist out of which plants might be formed than a veritable plant itself. It can hardly be distinguished from the stone; sharing in its utter passivity. It is as hard and dry and seemingly as lifeless. Watch it day after day, and there is no motion; no change of any kind. For years and years it continues the same. There is something that appeals powerfully to the sense of wonder in this perfect repose—this dormant suspended existence, hovering

continually as it were on the border-line between the mineral and the vegetable world. A spell as of some natural enchantment has passed upon it, condemning it to a perpetual hibernation. Only at rare intervals is this spell broken, and the seeming mineral awakens to a sense of its higher life. When all other kinds of vegetation are asleep or dead the lichen bestirs itself—fills its dry cells with sap from the very bosom of the storm and the snow wreath, softens and expands, and makes whatever growth it is capable of. The season that blights and destroys all other life is most favourable to its well being, and it looks its brightest when nature around is most desolate.

Lichens are in the ocean of air that covers the dry land what sea-weeds are in the ocean of water that covers the depths of the sea. All the usual parts of plants—root, stem, foliage, and blossom—have disappeared in them, or been drowned as it were out of existence by a flood of unfavourable conditions above which no green leaf emerges. The seed of vegetable life, instead of rearing a storied structure, rising high above the influences of gravitation, and spreading its green tent in the summer air, creeps close to the naked rock, and spreads around itself in a series of circular waves, like the ripples caused by a stone thrown into a pond. This infancy of vegetation cannot forego its hold of the ground; it clings closely to the bosom of its mother earth. But in these tiny arks that carry the spark of life floating on the surface of a dead physical world, we find a miracle of contrivance. Marvellously are they

adapted for their situation, and for the work they have to do. They grow where no other vegetation could exist—where the pulse of nature has almost ceased to beat. On lofty mountain summits below the snow-line, where hard quartz rocks look like white teeth fiercely clenched against the polar blasts; in arctic and antarctic wildernesses, where the snow is driven back for a few weeks by the ardour of the summer sun, leaving the ground brown and bare, as if scorched by fire; in lonely islands far in mid-ocean, scalped by all the winds of heaven; on barren rocky shores exposed to the bitter breath of the salt waves, that look like a fringe of death between the fertilising sea and the cultivated land: in such desolate places these forlorn hopes of the vegetable kingdom do their brave work. They have no struggle of life with their kindred as in higher types of plants, the stronger exterminating the weaker; but they have a still direr strife with the elements. They are cast upon the merciless inhospitalities of inorganic nature, alternately scorched by the sun and nipped by the frost, buffeted by the wind and drenched by the rain; and yet He whose tender mercies are over all His works takes care of them. He has given to them a structure and a mode of life admirably suited to the circumstances in which He has placed them. The round shape of all lichens is the best for security. It is the form of rest, so suitable for plants that are often placed in unfavourable circumstances—where growth must be by fits and starts, and where their whole work must often be simply endurance. It is the form that makes the

strongest resistance to the elements, for it gives a maximum of contents with a minimum of exposure, and all its points are perfectly balanced and proportioned —equally related to the central point and to one another. The material, too, of which lichens are composed is a special provision for their long periods of inaction and repose. It is chiefly starch—akin to the substance which enters so largely into seeds, bulbs, and other parts of plants that have ceased to display any vital action. This starch covers over and preserves the fire of life, as a common household fire is covered over and kept in by its own ashes. In dry weather it continues unchanged, and gives the lichens the grey hoary appearance which usually distinguishes them; but when the rain comes it expands, and softens, and assumes a greenish appearance, like that of the brown seed when it germinates and forms the blade. For their alternate periods of rest and activity—growth and torpor—lichens are thus wonderfully provided both by their circular form and their starchy substance.

And thus furnished they act as the pioneers of vegetation, climbing the bare crag and penetrating into the lonely wilderness, and planting there the flag of life. On the coral island that has just appeared above the surface of the ocean; on the stream of lava that has just cooled as it reached the lowest point in its descent from the volcano; on the cliffs that have been sculptured into smoothness by the recent passage of the glacier, lichens form the beginning of organic life—the first colonies of vegetation. No sooner does a boulder or rock rise

above ground than it is covered with their grey patches. These disintegrate the rock and form a soil in which higher plants can subsist; and by and by lichens give place to moss and grass; and perhaps a corn-field or a forest may long ages afterwards mark the spot where originally a few lichens scraped a miserable subsistence from the bare rock, and spent their life in struggling with the scorching sun and the cruel storm. The lichen is thus the first link in the chain that surrounds the earth with a zone of beauty and verdure. Between it and the oak and palm there is the same relation of mutual dependence which binds the highest and lowest objects of creation together.

As elements in the picturesque, lichens have long held a high place in the estimation of all lovers of nature. What would a ruin be without them? They give to old walls and weather-beaten castles and abbeys the hoary colouring of time. They soften the raw, harsh aspect of man's handiwork, and bring it into harmony with the meek unobtrusiveness of nature. They lay their quiet fingers on the scenes of human suffering and the monuments of human pride, and subdue them to their own eternal peace. On the old home that sheltered man's life, on the grey tombstone that records his death, they paint their frescoes of immortal hope; and amid scenes that remind us only of change and mortality they read their bright illuminated lesson of fixed and unchanging endurance. But not only are they thus elements in the quiet shading of nature's scenes, and in the picturesque adornment of man's work; they are often beautiful

in themselves, and exhibit a grace of outline and colour which rewards like a new discovery the eye that searches it out. Even the commonest and simplest species exhibit this signature of the great Artist, indicating that it is the work of One who has combined beauty with strength in all the objects of His sanctuary. No one can allow his eye in moments of reverie, when the mind is quickened, to linger however briefly upon a small bit of lichened wall or rock, without being astonished at the disclosure there given to him of a hidden beauty, such as he had not dreamt of in such waste places, and in things so obscure and unheeded. And surely the lesson comes home with power to the mind, that what we need is not a new revelation from Heaven, but eyes to see the revelation that is already before us in what we proudly call the common and unclean.

Lichens run through the whole chromatic scale, and show what striking effects nature can produce by an harmonious combination of a few simple lines and hues. Most of them are of a quiet grey tint, but some display the most vivid colours. One species covers trees and rocks with bright yellow powdery patches; another sprinkles them with a kind of green rust, especially in the neighbourhood of large towns. Almost every old wall, castle, and rocky sea-shore is emblazoned with the brilliant deep yellow rosettes of the common wall parmelia. Olive-green and pale primrose-yellow lichens diversify the surface of moorland boulders and dykes. And what is very remarkable, the higher we ascend the mountain-side, the farther north we penetrate, the brighter

becomes the colouring, and the more graceful and luxuriant the form of lichens; presenting in this respect a parallel to many flowering plants, such as the birch, whose stem is whiter, and whose leaves are more shining and fragrant in Norway than in this country. One of the loveliest species is the "Geographical Lichen" (*Lecidea geographica*), which is the most arctic, antarctic, and alpine plant in the world, occupying the extreme outpost of vegetation in altitude and latitude; and its yellow-green crust becomes brighter, smoother, and more continuous, and its characteristic black dots and lines, like towns, and rivers, and boundaries on a map, become deeper and glossier the nearer we approach the limit of perpetual snow. It is a fit companion of those exquisite alpine flowers that bloom their fairest in the same desolate circumstances, and exhibit a grace and beauty far surpassing those of their favoured sisters of the plain. The little Cup Lichen, that holds up its tiny goblets in myriads to catch the dewdrops upon the turfy top of every old wall and bank, assumes in one of its kindred forms that grows at a great height upon the mountains a larger size, a more elegant shape, and a more tender colour. Nothing of the kind can be lovelier than this mountain species, with its soft sulphur-coloured cups decked round the edge with waxen heads of the most brilliant scarlet, creeping over the bleak alpine turf, and forming, with the gay flowers of the purple saxifrage and the moss campion, a tiny garden in the wilderness. On the wildest islands of the antarctic ocean, where nothing else but lichens

grow, some of the finest species abound, whose large polished black shields contrast beautifully with their yellow shrubby stems; and on the tundras, or vast plains that border the polar ocean, the eye is delighted beyond measure with the delicate and intricate branching and the snowy purity of the larger lichens, which form almost the only vegetation. One lichen in New Zealand imitates the finest lace-work; another found on our grey northern moors resembles miniature coral; and on the highest and most exposed ridges of the Scottish mountains one leafy species occurs whose under side is of the most splendid orange colour, while its upper surface, constantly wetted by the clouds and mists, is of the most vivid green, varied by the chocolate colour of its large, flat, shield-like fructification. Thus, where we should expect the vegetation to partake of the sombre nature of the locality, and to be dwarfed, ill-shapen, and discoloured by the unfavourable circumstances, we find the most perfect and luxuriant forms; and just as the lichens in our sheltered woods and valleys flourish best in wild wintry weather, so do their congeners in the exposed altitudes and latitudes of the world, where there is a perpetual winter, and storms continually prevail, exhibit their brightest colouring and their most graceful shapes; reading to us thus a most needful lesson of one of the sweet uses of adversity, viz., to perfect that which concerneth us—to complete the ideal which a too easy and pleasant life often fails to realise.

We admire the beautiful ingenuity of the way in which

mosses are propagated — the slender stem that rises from the moss-tuft, the little oval urn that crowns it, with its veil that speedily falls off, its lid that soon follows, and its fringe of microscopic teeth that remain, and, fitting into each other, close over the mouth to protect the dust-like seed within from bad weather, and open and expand in sunshine to let in the ripening light and heat. But equally wonderful is the contrivance by which the lichens that grow by their side are perpetuated. Every one who has given a moment's attention to these plants as they fall under his eye, staining the stones of an old wall or the face of an exposed rock, must have noticed a number of little round or flat dots about the size of a pin's-head, mostly black, clustering about the centre of the grey patches. These points are the fructification—all that the plant has for blossom, fruit, and seed. The fructification always differs in colour from the vegetative part—from the filmy crust or leafy rosette. If the lichen is grey the fructification is generally black or flesh-colour; if it is yellow, the fructification is of a deeper yellow; if it is green, the fructification is chocolate-brown; and however irregular or amorphous may be the shape and appearance of the lichen, the fructification is always neat and symmetrical. The same law that brings out the greatest loveliness of the higher plants in those parts that are connected with the propagation of the species —the blossom and fruit—operates in the case of the lichens, and crowns the fructification of these lowly plants with all the grace and beauty of which they are

capable. The sweeter song of the thrush, and the brighter crimson of the robin's breast in spring; the transformation of the green foliage of the rose and lily into gaily-coloured petals in the blossoming time; and all the poetry and romance that are connected with the hour of human love, find their counterparts in those little round variously-coloured dots that give a brighter and neater appearance to the homely surface of the lichen. The little Cup Lichen on the wall, when it adorns the edge of its grey goblet as if with bits of red sealing-wax, responds to the universal impulse which prompts nature to adorn herself in her bridal hour; and experiences in its own humble degree the same feeling that moves the aristocratic bluebell by its side to hang out its cerulean chimes of blossom to be rung by the autumn breeze.

And not less worthy of examination is the specialised organ with which the lichen decks itself than the blossom of the brightest flower, which is only the highest outflush of the energy that moves transformingly in this lowly object. Cut a thin vertical slice from one of these little round dots and place it under the microscope, and you will find in it a number of delicate flask-shaped cells containing four, eight, twelve, or sixteen sporidia; that is, cells of an oval form with spores or seeds in their interior. Few things can exceed in beauty as microscopic objects the sporidia of many of the lichens. Some are bright scarlet, others deep blue, and others green, olive, golden yellow, or brown. When ripe they are ejected in moist weather, through the layer that

bears the seed vessels becoming wetted, and thus bulging out and exerting a pressure which ultimately bursts the seed-vessels at the summit, and causes the expulsion of their contents. It is by a similarly simple yet most effective process that the seeds of ferns and mosses are set free and sown broadcast by nature. Very curious is the fact that the number of the sporidia or seed-cases of the lichen is the same as that of the teeth around the mouth of the fruit capsule of the moss —always four or a multiple of four; thus showing that in minute microscopic parts and organs, where one might expect irregularity and chance results, there is the most rigid order and accuracy. Our own teeth are arranged according to a similar law; and He who numbers the very hairs of our head numbers the little teeth on the capsule of the neglected moss and the little seed-vessels of the obscure lichen which not one eye in a million ever sees. But it must not be supposed that the organs of fructification I have thus described are present on every lichen. A very large number of species and individuals are almost uniformly barren. In such cases other modes of propagation are supplemented; and indeed, the green spherical cells which form the active vegetative part of the lichen are capable of developing into new individuals if detached from the parent plant, and act in the economy of lichens the same part which buds, bulbs, and runners perform in that of trees and flowering plants. If the one mode of propagation is absent owing to unfavourable circumstances, the other is developed more exuberantly than

usual to supply its place; and just as the chances of failure are increased, so are the contrivances to prevent it multiplied. And thus the lichens are "pilgrims bold in nature's care," and spread themselves freely everywhere.

Nor are lichens without direct benefit to man. He has made them *humane* by human uses and associations. Some species, like the weeds that intrude into his fields, and the nettle and the dock that are never found far from his home, grow upon his walls and fruit-trees, and are peculiarly domesticated. But there are many that grow in the wild and refuse to come under the laws of the garden and field, and yet yield him substantial benefits. The reindeer-lichen feeds the herds of the Laplander; the Iceland moss produces a delicate jelly for the invalid; arctic travellers, in the absence of all other food, have been obliged to subsist upon the black shagreen-like tufts of the *tripe de roche;* and a manna-like lichen has sometimes fallen in showers in the Caspian deserts, and kept the people from starving in seasons of famine. In medicine, lichens at one time were almost exclusively employed, but they are now retained as cures for colds and fevers only in a few out-of-the-way old-fashioned localities. As dye-stuffs, however, they are still most valuable, and some of the loveliest hues are yielded by the orchil and the cudbear. It is a curious circumstance that the most brilliant tints in dyeing should be produced by the most colourless species, while the gayest lichen yield no colorific results of any value. In the case of the yellow parmelias, that

light up an old wall with their golden radiance, they show upon their surface the sunshine that has kindled and supported their life; but in the case of the grey lichens the sunshine has been all absorbed into their secret tissues, and not a trace of it is visible, and its rainbow hues can only be elicited by artificial processes. But whether reflected or absorbed, every lichen shows its indebtedness to the sunshine, and yields the colours that it has borrowed from the light and that have entered into its composition. In some part or organ, at some stage or other of its history or use, the coloured rays that seemed to be lost are found again, and nothing that is received but is faithfully accounted for. The dock and the sorrel by the wayside, that have continued green and sullen all their life, brighten into scarlet as they fade; and the hoary lichen on the dusky rock, that has drunk in all the hues of the spectrum and made no sign, yields when artificially treated, its hidden store of colour, and produces a violet and golden hue not unworthy of the fairest garden flower.

Nothing is lost in nature. God's handwriting on the wayside wall and the weather-beaten rock writes no sentence—"Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." On the lichen that grows over the letters on a tombstone is written the successful history of its own life; it represents the sum of all the influences to which it has been subjected. Would that the same could be truthfully said of him for whom that tombstone has been raised; whose work when he has done with it the lichen helps to bring back to the bosom of

the common mother earth, and for whom the lichen does the last continuous service of watchfulness by his grave, when the woods and the blossoms and the "gift-bearing grasses" have ended their ministry for ever!

CHAPTER V.

WEEDS.

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."—GENESIS III. 17, 18.

IT is the law of nature that plants should be diffused as widely as possible wherever the circumstances are favourable for their growth and welfare. For this purpose they are provided with the most admirable contrivances to maintain their own existence, and to propagate the species. But man interferes with this law in his processes of gardening and horticulture. His object is to cultivate beautiful or useful plants within inclosures, from which all other plants are excluded, and where an artificial soil and climate have been prepared. He wishes to separate from the struggle of the elements, and from the competition of other species, certain kinds of flowers or vegetables which are good for food or pleasant to the eye. In this he is only partially successful, for into the plot of ground which he has set apart from the waste common of nature a large number of plants intrude; and with them he has to maintain a constant

warfare. These plants are known by the common name of *weeds*, a term which, curious enough, is etymologically connected with Wodan or Odin, the great god of the northern mythology, to whose worship in former ages, in this country, our Wednesday, or Odinsday, was specially dedicated. Very few languages have any term equivalent to our popular word; and even science with its strict technical definitions takes no cognisance of the useful idea contained in it. There is no separate treatise upon the subject so far as I am aware; and weeds in botanical text-books are usually merged in the ordinary flora.

Any plant may become a weed by being accidentally found in a situation where its presence is not desired; but true weeds form a peculiar and distinct class. They are at once recognised by their mean and ragged appearance; their stems and foliage being neither fleshy nor leathery, but of a soft, flaccid description, and by the absence in most of them of conspicuous or beautiful blossoms. A look of vagabondage seems to characterise most of the members of the order, which at once stamps them as belonging to a pariah class. In the vegetable kingdom they are what gipsies are in the human world, and the same mystery surrounds them which is connected with that remarkable race. Like the gipsies they are essentially intruders and foreigners; never the native children of the soil on which they flourish. They may have come from long or short distances, but they have always been translated. There is no country where they are not found, and everywhere they have to encounter the prejudices which the popular mind invariably

entertains against foreigners. By the Germans a weed is contemptuously called *unkraut*, which means "no plant." In North America the native Indian calls the common plantain—the waybread of Lancashire and Cheshire villagers, which grows in this country by roadsides and on gravelled walks—"white man's foot," because it invariably follow the steps of the European. Longfellow, in his "Song of Hiawatha," thus alludes to it:—

> "Wheresoe'er they tread, beneath them
> Springs a flower unknown among us,
> Springs the 'White Man's Foot' in blossom."

The New Zealand savage calls the chickweed, which in that country flourishes with extraordinary luxuriance, "the Mark of the Pale Face." The yellow sorrel of the Cape has become a ubiquitous weed in Malta, where it is called "Haxixa ta l'Englisi," the English Plant; while a plant like the common groundsel introduced of late years from Peru, and one of the commonest weeds in the market gardens in the west of London, is known in the sandy districts of East Prussia, where it has become a perfect pest, as "the Frenchman's weed."

There is one peculiarity about weeds which is very remarkable, viz. that they only appear on ground which, either by cultivation or for some other purpose, has been disturbed by man. They are never found truly wild, in woods or hills, or uncultivated wastes far away from human dwellings. They never grow on virgin soil,

where human beings have never been. No weeds exist in those parts of the earth that are uninhabited, or where man is only a passing visitant. The Arctic and Antarctic regions are destitute of them; and above certain limits on mountain ranges they have no representatives. There were no traces of them in New Zealand, Australia, and America, when these countries were discovered, though they now abound in them. We never see the familiar weeds of our gardens and fields anywhere else except in association with our cultivated plants. The dandelion illumines our waysides with its miniature suns; and far and wide as its downy seeds may float in the air, they alight and germinate only around the dwellings of man. The chickweed and the groundsel have no home except in the garden beds; the thistle belongs to the cornfield, the sheep-sorrel to the potato-plot, and the dock to the meadow.

To every thoughtful mind the questions must occur, "Have the plants we call weeds always been weeds? If not, what is their native country? How did they come into connection with man, and into dependence upon his labours?" No satisfactory answer can be given to these questions. As a class there can be no doubt that weeds belong to the most recent flora of the globe. Their luxuriant and flaccid look indicates their modern origin; for the plants of the older geological ages are characterised by dry leathery leaves, and a general physiognomy like that of the existing flora of Australia. Indeed, the flora of Europe during the Eocene period bears a close resemblance to that of

Australia at the present day; so that in paying a visit to our southern colony, we are transporting ourselves back to the far-off ages when our own country had a climate and vegetation almost identical. The flora of Australia is the oldest flora at present existing on our globe. Our weeds came upon the scene long subsequent to this Australian or Eocene vegetation. In our own country they form part of the Germanic flora which overspread our low grounds after the passing away of the last glacial epoch, driving before them to the mountain tops the Alpine and Arctic plants, suited to a severer climate, which previously had covered the whole of Europe. They came from Western Asia and Northern Africa. They made their appearance in company with the beautiful and fruitful flora that is specially associated with the arrival of man, and spread from the same region which is supposed to be the cradle of the human race. In this way they are co-related with the Scripture account of the fall of man. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," was the sentenced pronounced by God upon man's sin. We are not to suppose from this circumstance that these noxious plants were specially created then and there for the express purpose of carrying out the punishment of man. They were previously in existence, though they may be said to belong very specially to the human epoch; but since that mournful event they have received a new significance, and are bound up with man in a new moral relation.

Most of our weeds possess all the characteristics of

a desert flora; special adaptations to a dry soil and arid climate. The dock and the dandelion have long tap-roots, the object of which is to store up a supply of water, enabling the plants possessing them to live through a long rainless period, and in spots from which the moisture has vanished, either by evaporation in the atmosphere or percolation through the soil. The dead-nettle is covered with silky hair, a provision made to attract the moisture of the air, and so to counteract the drought of the circumstances in which it grows; for we find that plants in moist localities are less hairy than those growing in dry, and if removed from the one to the other they have been observed to change their respective qualities to suit their change of conditions. It has been suggested that the downy seeds of the thistle and the dandelion, while their principal purpose is more effectually to diffuse the plant, are particularly related to arid conditions. It may also be noticed that a very large number of our familiar weeds have linear ragged leaves, or foliage more or less cut up into segments. This would appear to be another arrangement co-related with a dry habitat, as such leaves, approximating more in shape to hairs, would have a greater power of attracting the latent vapour of the air in arid situations than broad, fully-developed leaves would possess. Plants have a tendency to produce narrower and more divided leaves according to the aridity of their place of growth. Thorns and thistles are also characteristics of a desert flora; and many of our weeds are possessed of these weapons of defence. Thorns

are undeveloped branches, and prickles aborted leaf-stems; and these arrestments of growth are caused by poverty of conditions. A much larger amount of nourishment is needed for the production of leaves than for the growth of wood. We should, therefore, expect that plants growing in poor dry soil would be more remarkable for their woody than for their leafy products, would develop more spines and prickles and other woody excrescences than full-formed foliage. All these peculiarities, which distinguish more or less our native weeds, would seem to indicate that they came originally from a part of the earth less moist than our own. And the reason why they find a congenial home in our gardens and cultivated fields is because the soil of such places is made artificially like the natural soil of their native country. Our fields and gardens are divested of all unnecessary vegetation, and drained of all superfluous moisture, and thus are possessed of the dry, warm, exposed soil, to which the provisions for drought with which weeds are specially furnished are admirably adapted, and where in consequence they luxuriate and overcome other plants less specially endowed. They follow in the train of man, and show a remarkable predilection for his haunts, become domesticated under his care, not merely because of the abundance of the nitrogenous and calcareous substances to be found in the vicinity of human dwellings and in manured fields and gardens, but chiefly because he provides them with the dry soil and climate in which they can best grow.

It is an essential qualification of a weed that it should grow and spread with great rapidity. For this purpose it is endowed with marvellous contrivances in the way of buds and seeds. A very large number of our weeds, such as the thistle, groundsel, dandelion, colts-foot, scabious, daisy, ragwort, are composite flowers. The apparently single blossom is in reality a colony of separate blossoms, compressed by the obliteration of their floral stems around one central axis. We have an interesting proof of this in the five little notches at the end of each of the yellow strap-shaped rays of the dandelion—which are survivals of the original petals of the separate flowers, reduced through concentration and consolidation to the smallest compass, and altered from the tubular form by being split down the sides and opened out flat as is partially the case in the corolla of the honeysuckle. And this arrangement must have taken place long after the first appearance of true flowers on the earth, and may be regarded as a gradual adaptation of floral parts for more efficient propagation. Besides the economical multiplication of this method of blossoms within a small space, many composite plants have a most remarkable modification of another part of their floral system for the same purpose. The limb of the calyx of each floret in the compound blossom is reduced to a mere coronet of hairs, forming the well-known thistle-down, and the "clock of the dandelion," which country children blow away to ascertain the hour. Each seed has its downy parachute attached to it, which enables it to travel long distances from the parent plant

in search of suitable soil. Gifted with such special means of dispersion as these, we can easily understand why composite plants should form the largest family of the vegetable kingdom, and should be variously and extensively distributed over every quarter of the world. Every puff of wind blows off the ripened downy seeds of the dandelion and floats them far and near, so that we are not surprised that this weed should be found all through Europe and Asia, from Arctic latitudes to Algeria and India, and in America from Greenland to the Straits of Magellan; being at home in Japan and New Zealand as well as in the Canary Islands, and from an altitude of 11,000 feet to 18,000 feet on the Andes and Himalayas.

In most of our weeds the floral parts are small and inconspicuous. The reproductive act is so arranged as to economise material and to exhaust the vital force as little as possible, and the organs concerned in it are reduced to the simplest forms consistent with efficiency. Most of the species can be fertilised by the wind, which is always available, or by the help of insects that have a wide range of distribution and are abundant everywhere. In consequence of this floral economy, the vegetative system acquires a greater predominance in this class of plants than in almost any other, so that the life of the individual is carefully preserved even amid the most untoward conditions. A weed, by reason of the strength of its vegetative system, is able to stand extremes of heat and cold, and to recover from the roughest usage. It will hold on to life in circumstances which would prove fatal to most other plants; and

in this way it can abide the most favourable time for the development of its blossoms and seeds. Nay, it can propagate itself as well without blossoms as with them. Many of our weeds form long creeping stems, giving off at every joint buds which will produce perfect plants, and greatly extend the area which they occupy. No one who examines attentively the coltsfoot, one of the commonest and best-known weeds in our gardens and fields, but must be struck with the wonderful care which Nature takes of this vagrant outcast, and with the ample provision which she has made that it shall not be extirpated. It goes early to work, being one of the first flowers which the spring calls up from the winter's sleep, and it has thus a long time before it to carry out all its purposes. It produces its blossoms above the soil, before the leaves appear, like most spring flowers, in conformity with the law that Nature cares more for the type than for the single life, hastening, in a season of storm and change endangering the life of the species, to develop the parts essential to propagation before those necessary to the welfare of the individual. The young flower buds come up in a bent position; the involucre,—a ring of small leaves at the base of the blossom,—thus acting as a pent-house roof to protect it from the inclemency of the weather. The buds gradually elongate, and by the time the flower expands the stem becomes perfectly upright, so as to expose the floral organs to the sunshine of a later and more settled time. When the expanded blossom is fertilised, the involucre collapses over the young seeds, and gradually

assumes the former bent attitude, in order to protect them while they are ripening, becoming again upright when the seeds are fully matured, so as to expose them freely to the air. In each head there are about five hundred seeds, and each seed is furnished with its downy parachute, which catches the smallest breath of wind, and is carried off to be sown in the soil. By the time the leaves make their appearance the seeds of the plant are shed, and the action of the hoe that seeks to extirpate the obvious leaves, only aids in loosening the soil for the unsuspected seeds, or in scattering them over a wider surface. The roots are tough, succulent, and most tenacious of vitality, and not only creep for long distances along the ground, but penetrate beyond the depth of ordinary ploughing or hoeing. They bud and branch freely, each broken fragment sending up a new shoot, so that the more they are injured by the hoe the more they spread, unless they are at once removed from the soil. With a plant so richly provided against all contingencies, the farmer finds it most difficult to cope. When it gets a fair footing in a garden or field, it is almost impossible to eradicate it. And the coltsfoot is only one example—a little more striking, perhaps, than usual—of the extraordinary advantages which all weeds possess more or less in the struggle of life. The quantity of seeds which they all produce is most wonderful. An average plant of shepherd's purse will yield 800 flowers, with 20 seeds each, 16,000 seeds to a root. An average plant of chickweed will yield 300 flowers, with 10 seeds each, 3,000 seeds to a

root. This explains the great rapidity with which they will spread in favourable circumstances.

That weeds belong to the most recent and specialised flora of the world is evident from their wide distribution and wonderful powers of colonisation. In our own country they number about two hundred and thirty, and constitute about a seventh part of our native flora. We are constantly receiving accessions from the continent, along with the seeds of our cultivated plants. In company with the wheat and barley that can be cultivated in India down to the tropic zone, because they can be sown and reaped during the coldest quarter of the year, have been introduced a crowd of the common annual weeds of our country, such as the shepherd's purse, the chickweed, the spurge, and the corn-pimpernel, which also run through the cycle of their lives in the winter quarter. Half the weeds of American agriculture have been imported from Europe; and of the 2,100 flowering plants of the Northern United States, 320 are European. Our thistles have become naturalised in North America to such an extent as to have become a perfect pest; while in South America they cover some parts of the Pampas with thickets as high as a man on horseback, and more impervious than a tropical jungle. Our chickweed in New Zealand is fast exterminating the tough and woody native flax-plant; while our water-cress threatens to choke up altogether the still waters of New Zealand, where its stems often attain twelve feet in length and three-quarters of an inch in diameter. It is a singular circumstance that neither the southern

nor the western hemisphere has reciprocated this evil to any great extent, notwithstanding the vast intercourse that exists between these regions and our country, and the large number of their plants which we have introduced into our gardens. Australia and New Zealand have sent us no weeds, and America only a very few. The solution of this mystery, as Dr. Seemann clearly proves, is not to be found in any consideration of climate, soil, or circumstances. It is a question of race. The present flora of the United States and of Australia is older than the Germanic flora which now constitutes the principal vegetation of Europe. It is very similar to, if not absolutely identical with, that of Europe during the Miocene and Eocene epochs. America and Australia have not yet arrived at the degree of floral development to which Europe has attained; consequently plants coming to our country from Australia and America would not come as colonists, with a new part to play in it, but as survivors of an older flora whose cycle of existence had ages ago run out there. Our system of the rotation of crops is based upon the fact that the soil which has borne one kind of harvest will not produce the same next year, but requires another kind of crop to be grown on it. And Nature in her wilds carefully observes the same law. The former geological flora of this country has exhausted its capabilities in it, and, returning at a later date from another country, finds in it no circumstances suitable for its growth and extension. On the other hand, our plants going to Australia and America encounter there an older flora, which has

survived since the Eocene and Miocene epochs, and is about to pass away in the altered conditions of the world. In this struggle for existence the older flora has no chance with the newer and better-equipped flora coming for the first time in contact with a soil to it altogether virgin. The same stern law would appear to apply to the whole of organised nature. Man's own history furnishes some of the most remarkable examples of it. The native races associated with the peculiar flora of Australia and America are disappearing rapidly before the advance of the European; and it is not without reason that the Maori and the Red Indian view with dread the appearance of the plantain and the chickweed around their homes, for these are but the daring and hardy outposts of a vast invading army that will drive their native vegetation off the field, and the harbingers of a mighty people, who will ultimately march over their graves to the occupation of all the land.

Whatever our weeds were in their original state, they are now like the corn which man sows in the same field with them, endowed with habits so long acquired that they will part with their life sooner than abandon them. The original wild plant of the corn—if there ever was such a thing, and this admits of grave doubts—from which our corn was developed, may have been able to propagate and extend itself freely independent of man; but we know that without man's agency the corn, as it is now modified, would perish. It does not grow of its own accord, or by the natural dispersion and germination of its seed. Left to itself, it would quickly

disappear and become extinct. The one condition of its permanency in the world, of its growth in quantities sufficient for man's food, is that it be sown by man in ground carefully prepared beforehand to receive it. The same rule would appear to hold good in regard to the weeds which, in spite of himself, he cultivates along with it, and whose persistent presence makes the cultivation of the soil so difficult to him. We know them only in an artificial condition as abnormal forms of original wild types; and as such they are incapable of continuing themselves without man's help. Left to grow in soil that has reverted to its original wild condition, they would soon be overpowered by the surrounding vegetation, the grasses and mosses, and in a shorter or longer space of time they would inevitably disappear. I have seen many ruins of dwellings in upland glens from which the nettles and all the weeds that once grew in the field and garden-plot have utterly vanished, leaving only a dense thicket of bracken, or a lovely smooth carpet of greensward, to indicate among the heather that man had once inhabited the place. We are bound, therefore, to believe that so long as man cultivates the ground, so long will these weeds make their appearance, and in striking correlation with the primeval curse, compel him in the sweat of his face to eat his bread. When he ceases to till the ground, they will cease to grow in it.

Our weeds are distributed pretty widely over the different families of the vegetable kingdom. The poorest and meanest-looking of them claim kindred

with some of the brightest flowers in this and foreign countries. Why do these homely weeds differ so much from their splendid relatives? Whatever they might once have been in their wild condition, they have been placed in circumstances which have necessarily degraded them. Intruding upon the cherished domains of man, they have been treated uniformly as enemies, injured, extirpated, maimed, expelled in every possible way. For ages they have never had a chance of developing any latent beauty that may be in them. What loveliness those of them that are left long undisturbed display is shown by the buttercup, which makes an old meadow like a field of the cloth of gold, or the daisy, which transfigures every neglected pasture-land, and makes it whiter with its snowy robe than any fuller on earth could whiten it! How much more beautiful are the scarlet poppy and the corn blue-bottle that are left to grow among the corn-fields—for the same reason that the householder in the parable gave to the servants who would gather out the tares from the wheat, lest the wheat should be rooted up with them—than the sheep-sorrel and the groundsel, that are remorselessly hoed away from the cabbage-beds and the potato drills, whenever they make their appearance! How much more beautiful is the wild pansy that grows on the undisturbed upland pastures than its little field relative which grows on soil which is constantly upturned, and whose flowers have therefore been reduced to the lowest point in respect of colour and form! How much more striking is the large blue-eyed forget-me-not

of the bogs than the species which grows in the fields which man is constantly tilling! Our brighter weeds are invariably found in places where they are permitted to undergo those changes, by insect selection, which issue in richer and more varied loveliness still; whereas the homelier ones, standing directly in the way of the cultivation of the soil, are constantly harassed and prevented from putting forth their flowers, or taking advantage of those forces which regulate the wonderful evolution of floral beauty in the world. In their case, too, as in the human world, "the destruction of the poor is their poverty." And yet among the weeds that have the least conspicuous flowers, how much loveliness may be detected by the cultivated eye that seeks for it! In these the blossom, mean as it is, is made the most of; and we see in the varied colours of the opened and unopened flowers of the common viper's bugloss, and in the pinkish bracts of the purple dead-nettle, aspirations, as it were, on the part of these lowly plants towards a higher type of beauty.

But weeds, as weeds, will never develop much floral loveliness. Their *raison-d'être* is not to delight the eye of man, but to further his moral discipline. With the primeval curse of barrenness and weeds upon the earth are correlated the fact that thorns are stunted or abortive forms of branches or of buds that in happier circumstances would have gone on to develop fruit and foliage, and that the downy parasols by means of which the thistles spread their seeds in myriads are due to degeneration of floral parts; the very instru-

ments of man's punishment, the very goads that prick him to exertion being thus like himself failures on the part of nature to reach an ideal perfection, and thus witnesses to him in nature of his own degradation and of the imperfection of his life. The thorns and thistles of the wilderness without, are faithful emblems of the thorns and thistles of unsatisfied desires and unfulfilled hopes in the waste ground of the heart within. Their singular association with him, unwelcome as it is, is thus not altogether an unmixed evil. For, just as labour, the great curse of the world, has proved its greatest blessing, developing out of its cares and toils and duties the highest civilisation of man—as the thistle itself develops out of its prickly stem and foliage a rich purple blossom of beauty—so in the ever-renewed contest which man is obliged to wage with these persistent invaders of his gardens and fields, so that his table is literally furnished every year in the presence of his foes, he acquires habits of patience, perseverance, and steady industry, and learns lessons which, if he will only pay heed to them, will make him wise for this world and the next. The "Seed of the woman" who dwelt in the bush—the thorny product of the desert—who built His tabernacle out of the thorny acacia wood of the waste, who wore the crown of thorns on the cross, can by His gracious work of salvation bring good out of evil, and beauty out of ashes, and make all the weedy wildernesses of the world to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

CHAPTER VI.

RAIN UPON THE MOWN GRASS.

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass."—
PSALM lxxii. 6.

NO more tender and beautiful image than this can be found in the whole range of sacred poetry. It is full of precious significance. The memories and associations which it suggests are very sweet. We all know the summer harvest of the hay-makers, whose pleasant toils seem to anticipate those of the autumn harvest of the corn. How different is the aspect of the hay-field before the grass is cut, and after it is mown and the hay removed!

A meadow covered from end to end with tall ripe grass crowned with rich dark-purple heads of blossom and seed, and rippling in light and shadow like the waves of the sea, as the sun and the wind chase each other over them, is one of the most beautiful of rural sights. Myriads of wild flowers add the glory of their colour and the fragrance of their perfume to the blades of grass among which they grow. The sorrel here

and there touches the surface of the undulating mass with the russet hue of its long spikes; the honey-scented red clover stipples it into a warm glow when the sun catches its crimson head; and the soft shadows of the dappled clouds overhead throw into prominent effect the snowy gleam of the tall ox-eye daisies, and the umbels of white hemlock blossoms on their waving spray. The eye is never weary of gazing upon the bright and living mosaic. But let us go back to the same field when the hay-makers have done their work, and how sad and desolate is the spectacle which it presents! The bright halo of wild flowers has vanished; the bloom and glory of the grass has been cut down and removed; the fragrance that loaded the air is gone; and nothing remains but the stubble protruding an inch or two above the soil, and forming a pale, sickly yellow sward without grace of form or beauty of colour, and altogether out of harmony with the general tone of the landscape. The desolation of the spectacle is greatly aggravated during a season of drought, when the sky is as brass and the earth as iron, and the pitiless sun scorches the shorn field, and it makes no effort to recover what it has lost. But how striking is the change when a shower of rain comes! The dry, faded sward begins to brighten and assume a tinge of verdure; the stubble imbibes the moisture and expands with new life and puts forth new shoots. And as the soft reviving rain continues, the healing process goes on; the work of the scythe disappears, and the hard bristles of the grass lengthen and become

greener and more elastic every day, putting forth blade and blossom as of old, and attaining to their full ideal of shape and hue; until, at last, an after-math is formed which may be even more luxuriant than was the field in its first fresh, strong growth. The rain upon the mown grass is thus the harbinger of new beauties, and of a richer fragrance and fulness of life in the meadow. It constructs what the scythe had destroyed, and crowns with fresh glory what had been humbled to the dust.

Especially is the effect of the rain upon the mown grass remarkable in the arid soil and climate of Bible lands. The long grass growing on the house-tops, by the sides of streams and wells, or in shady mountain recesses, springs up rapidly; but when it is cut down for fodder what remains of it upon the spot seems under the scorching sun to dry up completely, and a brown naked waste remains behind. But when the rain comes upon this withered grass it starts up as if by magic, and resumes with wonderful rapidity its former freshness and fairness; the overheated air is cooled, and lays in turn its cool, healing touch upon what it formerly destroyed, and restores it to life and beauty; and when the sun bursts through the clouds and gilds the transparent blades of grass with its refulgence, it seems the smile of God made visible. These wonderfully reviving effects of the rain upon the mown grass are beautifully alluded to in many passages of Scripture, as in the triumphant song of Moses, when he says of the Word of God, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall

distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass;" and in the exquisite words of the Psalmist, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

The primary reference of the image was exceedingly appropriate. The title of the Psalm in which it occurs would indicate that it was composed by David for his son Solomon. But internal evidence fosters the belief rather that it belongs to a later date, when the Jewish kingdom was reduced to the lowest straits. Weakened by the separation of the northern tribes, and torn up by hostile factions within their own territories, the Jews were indeed in the condition of mown grass—shorn of their power, deprived of the largest portion of their territory, with their liberties trampled under foot, and nothing remaining of their former glory save the memory. In this blighted state they looked with fresh hope and expectation to the reign of a new king, who had just ascended the throne, and whose wise and righteous administration they hoped would be to them like the rain to the mown grass. All their social wounds would be healed, all their national grievances would be removed; their honour would once more be raised from the dust, and the diminished and impoverished kingdom of David would be restored to its former power and prestige. But no earthly king or kingdom could fulfil the high Jewish ideal, and therefore the accession of a new king, and the establishment of a new administration,

kindle anew the hope, long cherished in the hearts of the people, of a heaven-born king who should indeed restore the kingdom to Israel, and realise their highest expectations of earthly prosperity and glory; so that the prayers of David the son of Jesse might indeed be ended by being most fully answered.

Thus against the dark background of Jewish calamities arose the bright vision of the Messiah; and as the hope of resuscitating the faded splendours of the past died away, so the expectation grew of a heavenly king who should reign in righteousness, gather the dispersed of Israel into one, and make His kingdom co-extensive with the whole human race. As the fountain that has been stirred up from the bottom purifies itself as it runs on, so this national consciousness, profoundly quickened by God's judgments, became clearer and more spiritual in each successive period of affliction. Through their own sufferings they were able to realise more and more the worth and glory of suffering; and the idea of a suffering Messiah—of One who should enter into fellowship with men not through their glories, but through their trials, who should overcome the evil of the world not by wielding the sword of vengeance but by drinking the cup of shame and sorrow—was more and more clearly discerned. It was the hope of this coming Messiah that was to the Jews like rain upon the mown grass. It cheered and revived them in their times of deepest despondency; it kept ever before them their high calling as God's priests for mankind; as the elect nation that was appointed to

teach all other nations by their own representative discipline. They were now in the condition of the stubble of the field; their beauty and power were shorn away and withered, but they looked forward to the coming of a blessed time when an after-math of higher glory than they had ever experienced as a nation should spring up from the stunted and blighted remains of their present depression, and the wilderness should become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field should be counted for a forest. We see the contrast between that future glory and this present distress vividly portrayed in the wide difference between the image of the mown grass—shorn and withered—with which our Psalm opens, and the image of the handful of corn that should wave upon the tops of the mountains, whose fruit should be as the cedars of Lebanon, while they of the city should flourish like grass of the earth, with which it closes.

But the image has a wider application. The Jews were the representatives of the human race. And the condition of mankind is most aptly symbolised by the mown grass. Through the fall all flesh became grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field; the grass withered and the flower thereof faded. Sin robbed man of the beauty of the Divine image in which he had been created, and laid his honour in the dust. Having lost the health of the soul, he became the easy prey of outward evils—pain, disease, sorrow, death. Being no more satisfied from himself, he fell before the temptations to sensual pleasure, and looked to his

body for compensation for those pure enjoyments which his mind and heart could no longer yield him. Having no counteracting peace and serenity within—having no elasticity of soul to resist external pressure, every touch of the tempter's hand left its impression upon his nature, just as the finger leaves its hollow print in the swollen flesh of the dropsical, which has no principle of recovery to obliterate it. Everything became adverse to him who was afflicted with the great adversity of sin. Like the scorching sun upon the mown grass, the principalities and powers of this world blighted and withered still more what remained of the beauty and glory of his nature. And all his own schemes of self-salvation have only aggravated the evil and completed the wreck. But in this tragic scene, God, though justly offended, graciously interfered. Most righteously, when the experiment ended so disastrously, might He have removed for ever the ruins of it—uprooted the blighted and abortive growths altogether, driven the ploughshare of destruction over the whole field. But this was not the design of Heaven. God appeared not to destroy the sinner, but to save him from his sin. He came not, like the scorching sun to consume the mown grass with His fiery indignation, but like the tender, gentle rain, to nourish it up and stimulate it to new growth and blessedness. As He said regarding His people, so He said regarding the whole human race, "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all."

I have often thought that the very time and way in which God first appeared to Adam and Eve after they had sinned, is deeply significant of the wonderful tenderness and considerateness of all His subsequent dealings with the human race. The Scripture narrative tells us that our guilty first parents heard the voice of the Lord God, "walking in the garden in *the cool* of the day." There is in this language manifestly an accommodation to our human ways of thinking and feeling; but it does not the less express a most blessed truth. It tells us that God did not rush angrily upon Adam and Eve in the very moment of their transgression and inflict summary vengeance. Not in the burning heat and glare of the noonday; not in the terror and anguish of their newly-committed sin, when their eyes were opened and they knew the nature of what they had done, did God appear unto them. He came in *the cool of the day*, when the evening breeze had tempered the fierce heat, and the scorching sun was setting and relieving the sky of its fiery glow. He came after the first terrible shock of the discovery which sin had made, after the first dreadful revulsion of feeling was over, and the guilty pair could with some degree of calmness comprehend their new situation and prospects. And though His voice was stern, there was a tone of pity and tenderness in it. It pronounced judgment, but it spoke of mercy; and in the very core of the sentence that doomed them to toil and sorrow and exile, was contained the germ of a promise of life and blessedness. God came down

upon the misery of our first parents like rain upon the mown grass, and by His gentleness made them great. A higher life for man, a richer glory for God, issued out of man's transgression through the more abounding power of Divine grace. The after-math which sprang up in the wilderness under the rain of God's grace was more luxuriant and beautiful than even the first fair crop in Eden. Thus He who said, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," gave Himself the first and most remarkable fulfilment of the precept!

When in after years the first sin grew to a monstrous development of wickedness, and God had no alternative but to cut down the human stem to the very root—no sooner was this strange work of judgment done, than He returned to the essential element of His nature, and His love shone forth again on the ruined world. He came down upon the survivors of the human race like rain upon the mown grass; and, sympathising with their fears and forebodings as they put in their ploughshare above the grave of the old world, and sowed their seed in the very sediment of the flood that had destroyed all mankind, He said, "I will not again smite any more anything living as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease." And the same considerate kindness was manifested by Him throughout the whole history of the children of Israel. Notwithstanding their frequent backslidings, He was ready to heal and forgive them; and though He was compelled to take vengeance of their inventions, He was ever willing, on the least sign of contrition.

to restore them to His favour and love. But all these displays of His tenderness in the Old Testament history are eclipsed by the surpassing revelations of His grace in the New. Throughout the whole course of our Lord's life on earth, how wonderfully does He manifest to us the gentleness and tenderness of God. He came into our weary, worn-out world, from which the scythe of sin had shorn away all the purity and beauty and joy, as the rain upon the mown grass; and He revived and restored it to fresh verdure and brightness again. He brought back by His miracles the abundance and glory of the unfallen world; He removed the limitations and disabilities of the curse, and restored the primeval blessing. The withered arm was made whole as the other, the blind eye received sight, the lame feet walked, the dumb mouth spoke, the deaf ear heard, the fever-stricken was cured, the dead was raised to life. The ghastly mask fell from the leper's face and his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child. The maimed, and withered, and broken forms which sin had caused, were made to grow into new beauty and blessedness.

Jesus did not destroy the existing forms of society, He sanctioned and renewed them; He hallowed and dignified every relation of life which sin had polluted, by the purity of His own experience of it. He passed through the whole history of man, and claimed all that is best and sweetest in human life for God—showed that every part of it contains some spiritual capacity and power. The bruised reed He did not break, but caused it to flourish anew. Gentle to men's weaknesses, tender to

men's sorrows, pitiful to men's sins, even when He condemned them, He ever showed Himself. Wherever there was a spark of the Divine life, He fanned it into flame; wherever there was any growth of faith, however feeble, He cherished it, and caused it to bud and blossom. As a child seeks to warm by its breath into life and vigour a fly made torpid by the cold, so He breathed between His hands, as it were, upon some numbed and sin-chilled soul, and quickened it into newness of life. To the woman taken in adultery, He said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." On Peter, while denying Him, He fixed a look of mournful, but tender upbraiding, which caused him to weep bitterly, and led to his true conversion. To the woman that was a sinner, He gave the most generous reception, and His love quickened within her withered heart the pulse of a holy and purifying love. And of His very murderers, who, in their utter hatred of Him, seemed to divest themselves of every softer attribute of humanity, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Like rain upon the mown grass, He came down upon all the wants and woes and sins of men. He ever adopted the *constructive* method of doing good. He formed a new and better creation upon the purified framework of the old. And, as a piece of sward that had long been crushed and blanched under the weight and darkness of a stone, and had formed a nest for all foul creeping things that love darkness, grows green and fair when exposed to the soft April showers and sunshine, among whose slender

stems the daisy lights its tiny lamp, and over whose delicate blossoms the butterfly flits, so the crushed and blighted world, that had lain so long under the burden of the curse, began to grow sweet and verdant, and to attract all pure and beautiful things to it, under the living dew and sunshine of Jesus' presence.

To the soul that is ready to despair, the image of my text speaks with peculiar tenderness and power, and tells of love and hope, and eagerness to forgive. It is to the mown grass that the rain is most beneficial; and it is sinners deeply laden with the burden of unhappiness who are the special objects of Christ's care, for He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. He comes to save them from the hopelessness which makes them utterly reckless. How many are there who are weary of their lusts, sick of their evil ways, and yet continue in sin, simply because they see no mode of escape, and feel that they are sunk too low ever to rise to the calm pure heights of heavenly grace. In such desperate hearts the Saviour kindles a Divine hope, and awakens the feeling that they too are precious in the sight of God, and have still a future of usefulness and happiness before them. It was by such means that Howard, the great philanthropist, won over criminals who were hardened by a long course of strife and hatred, and had no share in the sympathies of their kind. He showed them that there was still a heart that felt for them and pitied their woes and wrongs; and this conviction did for them what no severity of punishment could accomplish. They melted before the disinterested kindness; and tears of

mingled wonder, penitence, and hope ran down the furrows of their rugged faces. And oh! if the despairing sinner could realise that God is full of pity, that He pardons with overflowing love, that He values even the wasted remains of a life spent in sin and folly, this would melt and change the hardest heart. The gospel message tells us that there is that in the very vilest that is worth redeeming; that what seems fit only to be cast out and trampled under foot is in the eye of God fit to be saved with the precious blood of His own Son. The very degradation and misery of such an one is the strongest plea for him in the Father's heart. "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but from me is thy fruit found." So He says to every sinner. Much of life is gone—its bloom, its freshness, its fragrance; but all is not gone. Upon the wasted wrecks of life He will come down like rain upon the mown grass, and there will be an after-math of fruits meet unto repentance—peaceable fruits of righteousness to His praise and glory.

To the sufferer, too, the image of the text has a most touching application. To many, life presents the aspect of a mown field. Some disappointment or trial has taken away all its bloom and fragrance. The world without is desolate, the world within is withered; and the remembrance of the flourishing past increases the barrenness of the present by its bright contrast. Human sympathy is unavailing; the most soothing words are like cold air to a quivering nerve, or scorching sunshine to the mown grass. It is in sad circumstances like these that the full significance of the Divine promise

is realised. He who has sent the trial does not act in an arbitrary manner, taking away the blessing in the mere wantonness of power. Dark and fatal as the trial may seem, it is designed to enlarge the capacity and increase the true wealth of life, by making it to include a more fruitful experience. An inferior possession is removed that a higher may be substituted. A transient joy that touches only one part of the nature is quenched, that a joy which satisfies the whole being, and is unspeakable and full of glory, may be kindled in its place. The Husbandman of souls deals with human beings as the farmer deals with his fields. The farmer removes the hay-crop that he may have a second crop of fodder. He cuts down the rye-grass in June, that he may have the purple honey-sweet blossoms and rich succulent stems and foliage of the clover in September. And so God cuts down the bright flowers and the green grass of summer joys, that the more mature and lasting experiences of the late autumn of life may be produced in their place. And though the field be left bare and desolate for a while, stripped of all that made it fair and sweet, abandoned like the mown grass under the cruel sunshine, God is not regardless, He *waits* to be gracious. The rain may not come at once to refresh and reconstruct ; but He is preparing all the time the consolation, and preparing the afflicted soul to receive it.

How wisely and tenderly does He act in the field of nature ! After a long drought He gradually brings over the hard blue sky a film of fleecy clouds, cools down the hot surface of the withered vegetation, opens the parched

pores of the leaves, softens their fibres, and brings all the dry dusty herbage of the fields and the foliage of the woods into the condition of a sponge, prepared to drink in the coming moisture. And then, when all is ready, the white-capped clouds distil the small soft rain that dimples the white dust on the roads, and hangs like beaded dew on leaf and blade. The showers at first come gently and drop daintily to the earth, with glimpses of sunshine to make the pattering drops bright. But by and by the blue seams of the clouds grow dark, the golden blazonry on their edges from the shrouded sun disappears, and the billowy masses cover all the sky with gloom; and then the rain comes down in torrents and smokes and twinkles along the ground. And how delicious is the clearing up of the summer storm! The freshened air is rich with fragrance; the lark and the blackbird pour forth their jubilant song, and over the last purple cloud in the west the glory of the sunshine paints a lovely rainbow that moves us "like the smile upon the face of the dying." And what a push of growth, what a quickened zest does the dripping earth manifest under the solemn creative spirit of love that is brooding over all, bringing light out of darkness, and life out of death! The grass grows into the greenness of sprouting grain, and the lean buds swell and burst, and disclose the magic bloom and verdure of summer. And if God thus wisely prepares the rain and graciously deals with the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will He not deal with even greater tenderness with souls made in His own

image, redeemed with the blood of His own Son, and destined to live for ever with Himself? He comes not with His healing touch in the first wild moment of anguish, when the sun of suffering is pouring down his scorching rays upon the broken joy, or the ruined hope, or the dead love. The tried soul cannot say in the first fierce agony "Thy will be done." Jesus Himself could not say it when His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. The angel must strengthen; the prostrate soul must have time to recover from the stunning blow; patience must have its perfect work. And in the cool of the day He comes, whose very presence gives relief, and draws His gentle cloud over the soul sick of the garish light, opens the closed pores of the heart shut to all human sympathy, softens the spirit growing hard in fierce defiance of fate; and thus preparing the afflicted soul for the blessing, He comes down upon the poor bruised, broken life, like rain upon the mown grass, and the affliction that is not joyous but grievous afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

God is very pitiful. They wrong Him utterly who imagine that human beings whom He has endowed so richly, are no more in the execution of His great plan for the universe, than are the chips of marble which the sculptor hews off and casts away while finishing his statue. We are not the refuse of His plan, but His own perfect workmanship. He has respect unto the work of His hands, and He will not forsake it until He has fulfilled in it and toward it all the good pleasure of His goodness. The death of His saints is precious in His sight. More

careful than the gold-beater of the fragments of his precious metal, or the lapidary of the powder of his gems, He values even the dust and the chips that He strikes away in perfecting that which concerneth us. Our very tears, shed in the painfulness of the trial, He keeps in His bottle. Withered and desolate from the worldly point of view the life that God chastens may be, but the very chastening nourishes and strengthens into fuller and nobler life. The captivity is turned, and like Job's case the end is richer than the beginning. God will restore the years that the locust hath eaten, and lead His suffering ones out through the valley of the shadow of death into green pastures and beside still waters. And though there may be fewer flowers in the after-math, though the life that has involved such sorrow may never have the same capacity for mere worldly joy as before, yet it will be richer and fairer in heavenly beauties, and more profitable to God and man. And suffering that is borne as Christ bore His, fruits in glory and reaps its reward in those "fields of living green" beyond the river, that shall never know the mower's scythe or sun with scorching ray, where all life's hopes are fulfilled, and all earth's ideals are realised.

CHAPTER VII.

SUMMER BLOSSOMS.

"The flower fadeth."—ISAIAH xl. 7.

WE expect the leaves to fade and fall in October. We are prepared for their fate. They have had their full time of growth and unfolding, and their fair share of the beauty and blessedness of the world. The year has passed its meridian and is about to set; nature has reached its highest development and achieved all its purposes; and it is the rule of the world that attainment is the end of hope, that all life must begin to perish at its height, and all work when it is finished bring forth death. But there is nothing to prepare us for the fading of the blossoms of early summer. Nature is everywhere repairing the ravages of winter, and clothing all her waste and desolate places with beauty. The veil is drawn aside; and in the unchanging monotone of the cuckoo that comes in from foreign lands, and the bursting of the gay lilies from the dark mould, and the primroses from the decay of last year's withered

leaves, we become mystically conscious of a larger and brighter world, full of promise and strange revelation. The leaves are still in their first tender greenness, and not a hint of decay has appeared on the transparent loveliness of the emerald fields and woods. When, therefore, we see the flowers fading on the ground and the blossoms falling from the tree, our feelings receive something like a shock. The contrast between the death of these fair creations and the bright overflowing fulness of life all around fills us with a peculiar sadness. A premature fate, we feel, has overtaken them; they have not had their full share of the feast of life. And thus while autumn teaches us the impressive lesson that "We all do fade as a leaf," a voice in early summer even more impressively says, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth." The very joyfulness of the season enhances the moral which the death of its flowers conveys. And it is in times of gladness and success that we are most apt to forget our mortality, and need most to be reminded of our transitory state.

Looking exclusively at the fact itself, there is nothing but sadness in the fading of the flower. It seems a wanton destruction of so much life and beauty; and we are apt to ask with melancholy wonder, "To what purpose is this waste?" Why should so many fair and exquisitely constructed things be formed only to gladden the eye for a few brief days, and then disappear like a vapour-wreath, which the same sun that has called

it into existence and touched it with gold, exhales back into the blue fields of heaven? I go forth to the woods, and I behold the green gloom lit up with innumerable constellations of wild flowers, whose light will soon go out, and leave behind a deeper darkness and desolation than before. I see in early summer the orchards white with apple blossoms, as if the snowy, braided clouds of heaven had descended and become entangled among the trees; but a sudden wind comes, and they are all blown down, and cover the ground with the saddest of all storms — the summer-snow. I watch the growth of a favourite flower with ever-increasing interest, as it develops new aspects of perfection; and when it has put forth its radiant, perfumed blossom, and is thus crowned with its crown of life, I wish that it would pause and allow me to feast all my senses upon its wealth of beauty for weeks unwearied; but it goes on by the very law of life to overstep all that fascinating perfection, and to fade and pass away.

And as evanescent are the counterparts of the flowers in the human world; are all the things of man that they symbolise. Flower life and human life have a wonderful correspondence to each other. The higher life runs parallel to the lower, and repeats in a grander form, with new qualities superadded, what is exhibited in a humble form in the inferior creation. Our Saviour bade us consider the lilies how they grow, not merely because of their lavish wealth of beautiful adorning, but because of the most important lessons

for the spiritual life which they suggest. They are decked with more than the glory of Solomon, because they have more than the wisdom of Solomon to teach us. We can see as in a mirror, in their simplicity of life and transparency of nature, truths which in our own higher and more complicated life are obscured by a more differentiated organisation and a greater multiplicity of details. A large portion of the imagery of the Bible is derived from the comparison between the nature of man and the nature of these mute and humble fellow-creatures. The whole history of human life is written, as the inspired writer tells us, on the fading blossom of the plant. Linnæus constructed a floral chronometer, in which the times and the seasons were measured out, not by the revolutions of sun, moon, and stars, but by the appearance of flowers in their appointed seasons and by the opening and closing of their blossoms each day. Some flowers come up in spring, others in summer, others in autumn; while a few pale melancholy ones gild the dark gloom of winter. Some blossoms open to the sunshine at early morn; and a bright succession of them, from dawn to sunset, close their eyes in slumber and sink into their rest. Is not the existence of each of us, like that flower-dial, measured by a succession of relations and friends, who gladdened for a few brief years certain seasons of it—childhood, youth, manhood, old age, corresponding to the natural seasons of the year or the hours of the day—and then passed away into the darkness of the tomb? The child in the spring time and morning of its life

can recall fond hearts that first taught it love's sweet lesson, and died in teaching it. The youth, in the summer of life's bloom and joy, can remember many a bright school companion whose promise was blighted in the bud, and who passed into silence, "inheritors of unfulfilled renown." The middle-aged man or woman can look back upon friends, the true-hearted and trusted, whose death has made them sorrowful indeed that they shall see their face no more. While the aged, sitting by the lonely hearth, and looking out upon a lonely world, feel that their path has led from grave to grave, and that the winter gloom which now overshadows them has blighted and silenced all that once made the sunshine and the music of their life. Friend after friend departs; human flower after human flower opens its inward heart of beauty and fragrance to the sunshine of life, and then closes it for ever, making the darkness of death itself beautiful. And how few do we meet to-day of those who began the journey of life with us! How many familiar unforgotten faces, tender with the light of other years, have dropped from the company of the living, and gone over to the great majority! A wind from God has moaned its dirge among the goodly boughs of our garden, and showers of prodigal blossoms have fallen into the sepulchre that yawns in it. And now we feel that eternity is no longer a waste outside desert, but a part of our own home, seeing that into it have gone so many dearer than life.

But not only do fading flowers represent the various

human friends and relatives that have died during the various seasons of our life; they also represent the successive fading of all those gifts and graces which make up our own individual life. All the goodliness of man fades as the flower of the field. Before he dies himself he parts one after the other with many of the things that make life desirable—physical beauty, strength, health, youthful activity, mental power, and heart affections. The eye becomes dim, the round rosy cheek bronzed and wrinkled, the flaxen curls dark and eventually grey, the agile step slow and measured, the vigorous arm feeble, and the erect graceful form bent under its load of years. And with the fading of these bodily qualities corresponds the weakening of memory, the sluggishness of the imagination, the blunting of the sensibilities, and the chilling of the affections, so that what once fired the youthful blood to enthusiasm now produces but a faint and feeble impression. The flowers of the individual life fade, as fades the individual person himself in the end; the petals of heart, and mind, and body, fall off one by one from the decaying human blossom; and at last the grey hair and the wrinkles round the eyes and on the forehead, are but the bare wintry branches of the tree of life rooted in the heart, from which has disappeared many a bright leaf and many a fair blossom.

All this is not joyous, but grievous! What disappears from life is as sad as the final disappearance of life itself. But much as we mourn all these fading flowers,

the human as well as the natural, we cannot wish them to abide for ever. We speak of everlasting flowers and amaranthine bowers, and long that things and persons should remain in all their beauty and preciousness unchanged. But we forget that it is the fading flower that is so wonderfully beautiful. Fix its beauty unchanged, and you make it an artificial flower, a dry mummy. It is the fleeting human blossom also that is so tenderly dear. We love each other more devotedly owing to the shadow feared of man that falls upon and consecrates our love; because we must soon, we know not how soon, be parted. We should feel everlasting flowers to be utterly incongruous in a world of change and decay; their steadfast continuance, when there was no reason for their continuance, would weary and offend our minds. Instead of wishing for everlasting flowers therefore, let us wish rather to be able to prize at its full worth the fleeting loveliness while it lasts, and to learn the grand lesson of contrast which its successive changes teach so impressively, that while the grass withereth and the flower fadeth, the word of the Lord, by which they were called into existence, of which grass and flower and all created things are but passing expressions, time syllables, as it were, endureth for ever.

But the truth of the fading flower has another and a brighter side than that which has just been turned towards us. It is not all death and desolation. We shall pass at once out of the shadow into the sunshine when we consider the reason why the flower fades. In the

economy of nature a blossom is not an end, but a means. It is not the crown and consummation of the plant, but one of its stages of growth. It is merely a ladder as it were towards a higher platform of existence, which is removed as unnecessary when that platform is reached; it is only a scaffolding by the aid of which a building is constructed, but which is taken away as a deformity when the structure is completed. The great design of the individual plant is to produce fruit and seed by means of which the life of the species may be perpetuated; and the design of the blossom is to attract insects by its bright colour, its sweet scent, or its honey, to fertilise the plant, or to do so by its own pollen, and so form the fruit and seed. And when this most mysterious and wonderful function is performed and the young fruit is set, the blossom fades or falls off as no longer necessary, as, indeed, a hindrance and a deformity. The flower fades that the fruit may take its place. The fading of the flower, rightly viewed, is therefore a natural and necessary phenomenon of life. In itself it is joyous, and not grievous. And I believe that in the unfallen Eden the fading flowers suggested no thought of gloom to Adam, but only of bright progress from life to fuller life, from a lower to a higher stage of development and perfection; just as I believe that in the restored Paradise above, the tree of life—representing a larger world of trees and flowers—which yielded twelve manner of fruits every month, must presuppose the fading and passing away of the blossoms that preceded and produced these fruits; and we cannot imagine any

sadness connected with any process or experience in that land from which sorrow and sighing have for ever fled away.

There is nothing in itself therefore to make us melancholy in the fading of the flowers, which is essentially a natural process of development. Were we, like Adam, the pure and sinless inhabitants of an unfallen world, it would be to us simply a phenomenon of progress. It is the fact of sin that is the sting of death, in the natural as in the human world. It is we by our guilt who have made the creature of God subject to vanity against its own will; who have brought it under the bondage of corruption that reacts so terribly upon our own spirits. We have put into nature the images of our own ruin and death, which she reflects back so faithfully to us. Not a stone or a blade of grass but is now a mute memorial to us of struggle and death. All things are set to the same key-note of toil and suffering to which our own life is attuned. On the other hand, take away the sting of sin, and the struggle and death of nature become only a progress to higher life, and every grave is a cradle. Decay is a process of evolution, and all its premonitions of wreck and ruin awaken only joyful anticipations. Nature interpreted and glorified by the redemption of man, which is also her own—for as she fell with him so shall she be restored with him—consecrates her objects and processes to a higher symbolism; so that, whereas before they spoke only of the fall and the curse, so now they are types of life and rejuvenescence.

Viewed, then, in the light of Him who hath brought life and immortality to light in His gospel, and free from the cloud of sin, the fading of human-life and of flower-life is not in reality sad, but joyful. The flower fades and falls, but a flower is only the means by which the fruit is formed. Man dies, but his life on earth is only for the formation of the eternal life; and all its fair and precious things that are passing away from it, as it passes away itself, are but the withering of the petals around the fruit that is setting and ripening for immortality. Every gift we receive is but a promise; every beauty we behold but a prophecy; every pleasure we enjoy but a foretaste. All the uses and enjoyments of earthly things, the bloom and loveliness of youth, the calm wisdom and soberness of age, our powers of body and gifts of mind, and all the exercise of them, our experiences of life, and the circumstances in which we are placed—all are for the development of our spiritual and everlasting being. The Christian's whole life is but the earnest of the inheritance that awaits him. We see by faith, although we are slow of heart to believe it, that our very losses and privations are ministering to a noble and goodly development pregnant with an everlasting promise. We see all our earthly experience, whether painful or joyful, connecting itself with heaven as the Father's discipline, the training of a blessed and glorious life. It flowers here and fruits in eternity. Death itself is the act of blossoming. It is a scientific fact that it is the dying plant alone that flowers. Blossoming is the highest point in plant life. When it has produced

its blossom it perishes. In human life it is so likewise. Our existence here is but a daily dying, the continual production of a blossom, within whose petals as they wither is expanding the immortal fruit; and death is but the final falling of the sere petals from the fruit when it has set. It is not destruction, but development; the mortal not destroyed, but putting on immortality.

Fruit is the end of vegetable life. It is for this every plant exists. It clings tenaciously to existence until it produces fruit. The most stunted wayside weed, starved by its miserable circumstances, will hold on to the very skirts of life until it has reached this consummation. And the end is more valuable than the means. Beautiful as is the blossom, it has no enduring value. It is fruit alone that repays the efforts of the plant itself, and the toil and skill expended upon its cultivation. And so it is in human life. Precious as are the blossoms of hope that the youthful life produces so abundantly, the fruits of riper years are far more precious. Fruition, fulfilment, is ever worth more than mere promise. The dreams of youth were fancies; the dreams of manhood are motives. The first fresh love of youth is untried and inexperienced; the love of maturity has endured many a strain, and reposes upon a foundation of unshaken trust. Better far are the sober qualities of life's long experience than the fragile brilliant impulses of youth. We can rely more upon the wise judgment, the matured intellect, and the tried and sanctified affection of the aged, than upon the good intentions, and warm enthusiasm of

youth. There is indeed no time of a man's life when he is more profitable to God and man, when he is a nobler specimen of what God would have a man to be, than when his brow is wrinkled and his hair silvered with the painful but precious experiences of life. And there is a satisfying though pensive beauty about the fruit of old age, which the frail slight blossom of youth, full only of promise and hope, altogether lacks.

And then consider that the blossom belongs to the plant itself, the fruit to the race. The blossom is the end of the selfish life; the fruit is the beginning of the unselfish. The plant till it flowers, lives only for itself; but when its flower passes on to the fruit and seed, it lives no more for itself, but for the new life that is to spring from it; and it is a remarkable fact, full of suggestive meaning, that it is in this unselfish part that all the beauty, and fragrance, and sweetness of the plant come out and culminate. Further still, the plant that flowers is confined to one spot; but when it fruits and seeds it gets wings, as it were, and can fly away from its natal place to long distances, as you have often seen the thistle-down or the fleecy parasol of the dandelion do, to make the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. And is it not so in human life? That death which seems to bound our life, in reality gives us wings, and takes us out of this cramped and narrow sphere of change, and sorrow, and sin, into the freer air and larger sunshine of God's everlasting kingdom.

The fruition of life is not the limitation, but the freedom and enlargement of life. What a glorious development we shall have in the after-life, when the blossoms of this life have faded about us, and the fruit of immortality is brought forth, and we shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ! The possibilities of a seed are boundless. In the seed the plant renews itself, corrects all its defects and decays, and attains to its ideal. The young plant that springs from the seed brings back the brown and withered form of its parent, warped and limited by unfavourable circumstances, discoloured and insect-eaten, to the fresh, bright perfection of colour and form which belongs to the type; and so the seed-form of our being, developing in the everlasting spring beyond the grave, where the perfect conditions of its life are present, will unfold all the latent possibilities of our nature, will reach its highest ideal, and be fitted to work out unwearied all the grand ministries of eternity. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." And who knows what life, and beauty, and blessedness to others may spring from seed dropped by our losses and death? Who knows whether our afflictions may not be joys, and our death life from the dead to hundreds who never knew us? Rejoicing in the blossoms of our life, we are living for ourselves; but when our flowers fade and fall, and our fruit and seed are formed, we live no more unto ourselves, but

unto Him that died for us, and unto all for whom He died.

And here I would remark parenthetically, that the meaning of the Apostle in that most significant saying, "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die," is constantly misunderstood. It does not refer to the change that takes place in the seed after it is put into the earth—the dissolution of the pericarp that the embryo may be nourished, take root, and grow up—but to the death of the plant in the seed that it produces, that death which must necessarily intervene when there is progress from a lower to a higher degree or species of life. If the plant is to be quickened, if in its present sere, discoloured, stunted, insect-eaten form it is to become something brighter, fairer, it must go on past the blossom and fruit to produce seed, and to die in that seed; and then out of that dead seed buried in its grave in the soil will issue a higher life, that will realise more perfectly the ideal of the plant.

Looking thus at this life as only the flower-form of our being, we see the reason of its brevity. The life of the blossom is short because it has to prepare the way for the fruit; and the season in which it is put forth is dangerous to the formation of the tender germ. Alpine plants below the level of perpetual snow, and our own spring plants after the winter snow is over, hasten to flower and perfect their fruit and seed, as if there were no time to lose, owing to the capricious weather of the early year; and it is a remarkable fact that all spring

plants develop blossoms straight from the root, or bulb, or branch, without the intervention of foliage, in order to get this important process accomplished with the shortest delay, for nature is more careful of the type than of the single life. How anxious is the gardener during the changeable weather of April and May when his blossoms are out, lest a single night of frost should destroy his hopes of a good fruit year! But as the season advances, and the weather becomes warmer and more settled, so does he look forward with greater confidence to the harvest that shall reward all his toil and care. In like manner our life is short; it is as the flower of the grass; it is soon, at the latest, cut off, and we flee away; and it is thus transitory because it is the season of trial and probation for the everlasting state. Amid the perils of this pleasing, anxious being; amid the dangers of a world lying in wickedness; amid fightings without and fears within, we should rejoice that while the outward man is decaying the inward man is renewed more and more. We should consider that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment—light and transient as a summer blossom—are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We should welcome the growing infirmities and decays of life as signs that summer, the season of fleeting glories, is passing away, and that autumn, the season of enduring fruition, is drawing nigh. They proclaim to us that now our salvation is nearer than when we

believed—that we are fast leaving behind us this scene of passing and perishing things, and approaching nearer to that hour when time with all its decays and changes shall be no more, and we shall enter into that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away.

But I reserve the grandest thought connected with my theme to the last. The flower fades and falls off the plant, but it does not altogether vanish; it does not perish utterly. Some part of it, larger or smaller, according to the species, remains behind to form the nucleus of the fruit. In every case the lower part of the central and most important part of the blossom is left, and it is out of it that the fruit is formed. The fruit, in the language of the botanist, is simply the enlarged and matured pistil. In many cases a considerable portion of what in other blossoms is most fragile and evanescent is incorporated with and forms the actual substance of the fruit. In some plants the style and stigma, which are among the first to disappear, remain persistently attached to the fruit in a dry condition; while in others they not only remain fleshy, but even take a new development, and become a marked addition to the fruit. In the apple the greater part of the edible portion is simply an increase of the tube of the calyx, which in this case has become fleshy. A good deal of the fleeting flower, indeed all that is essential in it, is thus made permanent in the enduring fruit; and the fruit itself may be looked upon as a more perfect and lasting blossom, retaining the colour, and fragrance,

and grace of form that distinguished the blossom, but super-adding qualities, such as nutritiousness and flavour, which the blossom lacked. And is not the analogy here very instructive and consoling? Not only do all our sanctified losses turn to gains, *but the gains are largely composed of what we lost.* We take up with us into every stage of our advancing progress what was best and most serviceable in the previous stage; and in the fruit of our achievements we can trace much of the fair blossoms of hope and aspiration which led to its formation. Nothing that is really good in human life ought to be thrown away as useless when we have outgrown it. The good of childhood ought to remain in manhood. The enthusiasm, the freshness of interest, the innocent simplicity, the spirit of hope, inquiry, and wonder which characterise our early years, ought to endure late in life, under the calmer and quieter outside of maturity. We ought to take the child-heart with us into old age; and old age should be but the beautiful ripened fruit of the blossom of youth, taking up into its own settled fulness much of what was holiest and loveliest in childhood and manhood. We ought to grow by regaining in a truer and more lasting form the things that made our youth bright and happy. We must enter the kingdom of heaven on to the latest hour of life as little children.

Let us not mourn, then, that so many fair and precious things pass away from us as we go on to our immortality; for nothing that is really beautiful and precious—nothing that is really essential to our

well-being—shall perish utterly, but shall be absorbed into our souls and become their eternal wealth. The grass withereth and the flower fadeth, but there is an everlasting principle in these fleeting phantoms of existence. The fair, fragile blossom must turn to its native dust, but the truth which it taught, and the beauty which it disclosed are fadeless as the soul itself, and, incorporated with the life of the soul, will bloom in its beauty and truth for evermore. The flower fades, but the glory of it lives—that Word of God of which it was the inspired, though silent teacher, which liveth and abideth an incorruptible seed in the soul that received it and turned it into fruit. All the circumstances of our natural life, all the accidents of our outward condition, will shortly fade away and disappear like the flower, but the moral discipline which they afforded to us, the virtues and graces which they helped to produce and develop in us, the patience, the hopefulness, the tenderness, the heavenly-mindedness which they wrought in us, will form the very texture, so to speak, of the soul—an inseparable part of our being here and hereafter. The kingdom of heaven in the highest sense is the restitution of all things. Creation will not perish, but be recast in finer moulds. The things we lost, or overpassed, or overjoyed shall be restored. The friends who died and left us desolate shall meet us again on the happier shore. The flowers that faded, and the fruits which they formed in this wilderness world, will be garnered up for us in the harvest-home of heaven, and shall

constitute the blessedness and fulness of our being throughout eternity.

I am gazing while I write these sentences upon the drooping flower of a snowdrop in a glass beside me; and I see painted on the tips of each of its petals on the outside, a little heart or crescent of green—and in the inside, slender pencilled lines of the same hue. What is the meaning of this curious tinting, so unusual in blossoms, which we see also though in a fainter degree in another member of the lily family, the stately fragrant Eucharis? It tells us the secret that the snowy blossom is only a transformation of the common green leaf, and these green marks on its vestal glory are traces of its lowly origin. The blossom cherishes, in the very heart of its transfiguration, memories of the quiet green youth of the plant. It has passed out of its temporary burial in the bract or sheath, and unfolded in the new life an undreamt-of beauty; but still it hangs down its head towards the familiar soil, and carries with it into its greatest development these green birth-marks. And is not this an expressive symbol of the nature of our future life? We too, emerging from the sheath of death, shall be changed; the mortal shall blossom into immortality, and that which is sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory; but we shall retain amid the new splendour all that made our life on earth precious to us. The white robes of the redeemed will cover hearts made by reason of their perfect purification more tender than ever to the old affections, as the emerald rainbow of Heaven will preserve the memory of the green

earth, and the glorified Redeemer Himself will appear in the midst of the Throne with the marks of the Cross—a Lamb as it had been slain.

"Is the bower lost then? Who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the solstice and the frost,
And that prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and uttermost;

"Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His throne,
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—'All is lost . . . and won!'"

CHAPTER VIII.

MOUNTAIN SPRINGS.

"He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills."—PSALM civ. 10.

MY little girl gazing one day upon the brown freckled ripples of a streamlet, suddenly said to me, "Why does the water *always* run?" This is a question that is apt to puzzle many older minds. It seems a great mystery why hour after hour the stream should continue to flow without any diminution. You sit beside it a whole forenoon and watch a stone in its bed, and you see that the water keeps the same level along its sides. Day after day its voice is as full-toned and its sparkle as bright as ever; and you wonder from what perennial fountain comes the inexhaustible supply. Let us ascend to the source of the stream, and we shall obtain an explanation of the mystery. We pass by the way many beautiful and interesting objects: the grass of Parnassus whitening the marshy places on either side like autumn snow; the golden saxifrage clothing the boulders with masses of yellow bloom; and the beaded

leaves of the sun-dew glistening among the red moss-tufts, from which they are hardly distinguishable, lying in wait, as it were, like a vegetable spider, with a stealthy look about it, to catch the small black flies upon whose juice it feeds. We leave behind us the heather whose crimson tufts are reflected in the little linns. The last birch, dwarfed to a mere bush, lifts its slender snow-white stem on a grey lichened crag overhanging a tiny waterfall; and the last rowan-tree stands as a sentinel at the uttermost limit of man's domains, and guards them by its spell from all the mystic evils of the desolate waste beyond. We now enter upon a region as free of every trace of man's occupation as the ocean itself. Nature here is not the slave of man, but the face of God. The sweet-scented heath-fern disappears, and soon even the grass itself vanishes, becoming gradually yellower and scantier, until at last the hill-side is covered only with loose stones, grey with lichens, and interspersed with tufts of mosses, among which stray saxifrages and other alpine flowers appear like the first stars in the pale evening sky.

Here we reach the source of the streamlet we have followed so long. It is a hollow in the side of the hill, marked out like an oasis in the desert by the beauty and softness of its verdure as contrasted with the bare desolate aspect of the scenery around. The hollow is filled with great cushions of moss, whose rich and harmonious variety of colouring—one hue blending imperceptibly with another—would delight a painter's eye. At the point where the water struggles clear of its swaddling-

bands of vegetation, and bursts into a little rill, and gives its first baby cry of pleasure, the moss is of the richest and deepest emerald, every leaf being of the most exquisite pellucid texture; farther up it is of a pale yellow and red hue; and at the well-eye, where there is a centre of clear water, it is of the most beautiful and vivid crimson. Forming an outermost circle is a fringe of rushes, sucking the "milk of waters" into their fair luxuriant growth; each wearing its brown flag of a blossom half-mast high, as it were, in sympathy with the pensiveness of the solitude and the sorrowful moaning of the wind. This bright verdure is the creation of the spring. Like a star brightening its own rays it has spread around it in the arid waste a halo of living loveliness. But, beautiful and solid as it looks, this mass of verdure is treacherous; it is saturated with the coldest water, and rests upon a basis of the finest mud, and the unwary foot trusting itself on it will sink up to the knee. I know nothing more pleasant and suggestive than to gaze upon the centre of clear water in the midst of this emerald rainbow of alpine vegetation, translucent as air, welling up with a faintly perceptible motion on its surface from the heart of the rock. It is the pulse of the mountain beating calmly and steadily, as it has done for ages untold, while the rocks around are crumbling into dust, and the vegetation which its waters nourish is decaying, and the mountain itself falling cometh to nought. It is the one thing in nature that is always fresh and young—that has a voice only of perpetual life and gladness—and is therefore the fittest

emblem of that immortal joy which Christ creates in the heart that loves Him.

We see in the cushions of moss around its source the explanation of the ceaseless flow of the streamlet down in the valley. The moss by its spongy texture imbibes the water until thoroughly saturated, prevents its evaporation, and parts with the excess slowly and gradually. Presenting a surface constantly moist, it attracts the moisture of the clouds and the mists of the cool mountain tops, on the principle which operates throughout all nature, as well as human economy, that "Whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." And thus the supply is constantly maintained and dispersed. Nearly all our mountain tops have large spaces covered with dense carpets of moss. On these the snow appears early and lingers late; and during the rest of the year the clouds and mists are constantly distilling their moisture into them. They are therefore thoroughly charged with water, and give rise, wherever the ground forms a sloping hollow, to tiny rills, which drain the mossy sides of the hill, and nourish large quantities of moss along their course; and these in their turn imbibe more moisture from the clouds and mists, and conserve the gathering waters, until at last they acquire some volume, and in well-defined channels flow down to the valley in a series of snowy cascades and sparkling pools. It is interesting to think of the moss being thus the mediator between the weeping clouds and the arid earth, and that each drop of the stream has oozed through the pellucid

leaves and trickled from stem to stem of this humble vegetation. The little emerald cup of mountain moss first holds the crystal draught which in its overflowing forms the mighty river. There is something that appeals powerfully to the imagination in this association of one of the grandest objects of nature with one of the humblest and most minute. But it is ever thus in God's administration: the snow-flake leads to the sun, and the spider's thread marks the passage of the star to the astronomer.

Moss serves on our mountains which are below the snow-line the same purpose which the glacier serves on the mountains of other lands that are above the snow-line. They each afford one of the most striking examples of those marvellous adjustments which pervade the whole economy of nature. Without the intervention of the glacier and the moss the moisture that falls on the mountain summits would speedily run off in raging torrents, inundating the plains, scattering over the cultivated fields the barren *débris* of the mountains, and leaving behind after their subsidence a dry white wilderness of stones and mud. But the moss and the glacier retain the moisture of the clouds, and part with it gradually and safely, allowing it to descend to the plains so gently and continuously that, instead of destroying, it imparts beauty and fertility to the fields.

Nothing in nature is more wonderful than the ministry of the glacier. The ocean sends its waters by evaporation to the summits of lofty mountains, where they fall

in the form of snow. Summer and winter, that snow remains unmelted; and unless some way were provided for getting rid of the constant accumulation, all the waters of the ocean would in the end be transferred from their bed and piled high upon the mountains. But nature has ordained that the pressure of the snowy mass on the upper parts should force the lower snow down into the valleys, and convert it by regelation into a mass of solid ice. This tongue of ice protrudes far below the limits of perpetual snow, and has a peculiar power of adapting itself to the various contours of the ground over which it passes. It seems to the senses fixed and solid as the everlasting rocks that tower above its flanks—the very type of rigid inflexibility and silent steadfastness. And yet it flows from the higher valleys to the lower ones at a very slow pace indeed, but one that is capable of being measured, being proportioned to the mass of ice and the fall and width of the valley. It comes down into the midst of verdure and fertility, where the most brilliant and delicate flowers bloom in contact with it, and its vast mass withstands, with a diminution comparatively insignificant, the continued action of an almost tropical sun. At last its most advanced front, which almost touches the borders of a fir-wood, reaches a warmer region, and there it melts and forms a full-bodied arrowy stream, which flows on, spreading brightness and verdure along its course, "sowing the dust of continents to be," and finally falling into the distant ocean; thus returning to it the water that

had been drawn from it perhaps centuries previously. Nothing seems so utterly wasted as the snowflake that falls on a lofty mountain-peak in the heart of a great continent, and yet it finds its way surely to its parent source in the ocean, after having accomplished a blessed ministry of usefulness by the way: a beautiful symbol of the fact that every word fitly spoken, and every good deed wisely done, however obscure the circumstances, will not be thrown away! "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

In all nature there is no other example of the peculiar motion of the glacier; it is the exclusive property of ice, and it is the only motion, slow and gradual enough, without ceasing altogether, to convey the enormous masses of frozen moisture on the mountain summits down into the valleys with safety and benefit. He who divided the waters of the Red Sea, and congealed them into crystal walls on either side, that His people might pass through, suspends on the mountain side the accumulated waters of years in the crystal glacier, and lets them loose by degrees, so that they shall bless instead of ravaging the fields which man inhabits and cultivates. The gentleness of God is most strikingly

displayed in the controlling of the tremendous power that is locked up in the icy cataract. It indeed makes us great and happy, when otherwise we might have been crushed or impoverished.

God brings about the same result on our smaller mountains by the widely different agency of the lowly moss. The green cushions of the moss carry down into the upland valleys the waters that fall upon the summits in the form best adapted to insure a steady and uniform supply. And how quietly and imperceptibly is this done! The solid waves of the glacier grind their bed to dust, scar and disfigure the face of nature and topple over the crumbling rocks into their abysses with the noise of thunder; but the moss lines the bed of the alpine rill with a velvet carpet, which protects it from injury, and carries down its purling current with softest tenderness, stealing half the music from the white twinkling feet of the naiads as they pass over it. The water that is frozen into the myriad crystal flowers which make up the structure of the glacier, trickles from leaf to leaf of the living moss; and thus, though the agency of the glacier looks grander, the agency of the moss is grander in reality. The one is mechanical, the other is living; and we know that the smallest living thing is of more consideration than the most enormous masses of dead matter. The still small voice of the living moss is in reality more powerful than the earthquake and the whirlwind of the lifeless glacier. Thus God compensates our springs that run among the hills for their smallness

by giving them to us, clear and transparent as the blue heavens themselves, from the tiny goblets of the living moss; whereas the swift streams of other lands are born of the lifeless glacier, and run foul and dark with the wrecks of the mountains. But surely it is a very marvellous link that connects together in the same beneficent task of circulating the vital fluid through the veins of the earth, objects so widely different as a glacier and a moss!

Associated with the glacier and the moss in the formation of the springs that run among the hills, is the tree. The Chinese have a proverb that the grandest rivers are cradled in the leaves of the pine. Trees by the ancients were invested with superstitious ideas as the parents of fountains and streams. Standing on the slopes of the hills they embrace the passing clouds in their arms, and condense them by their cool leaves into water which descends to the ground in drops, and percolating through the moss and grass which the shadowed earth produces, forms the source of springs. Artificial springs may be created among the foldings of the hills by simply digging a hole in the ground, and sheltering it from the sun's rays by planting around it trees and bushes, when the rain that falls will drain towards this hole, and in a short time make it a source of living water. The rod of Moses, smiting the rock and producing the miraculous water from it, is thus in a line with the natural way in which the growth of the tree on the arid rock gives birth to a fountain. Periodical rains, however abundant they may be, speedily pass

away and descend into the valleys with unrestrained violence, doing infinite harm. But the alpine woods retain the fallen moisture long after the storm has abated, and the surface of the hill is dried up under the scorching sun. The continued existence of moisture in these woods, and the constant evaporation from them, produce a cooler atmosphere, which in its turn attracts and condenses the vapour of the clouds and thus replenishes the springs. When the trees are cut down on the mountains, this wonderful equilibrium of nature is disturbed, and her wise and beneficent arrangements are frustrated. Springs and streams are dried up, the climate rendered hot and arid, and lands once richly cultivated are converted into deserts.

Owing to the disforesting of the mountains of Greece, many of the fountains and rivers celebrated by the classic poets have either entirely disappeared or are greatly diminished in size; while regions once covered with rich harvests, vineyards, and olive-groves, are now arid wastes of rock or sand. Italy, lying in the centre of the Mediterranean, between the snows of the Alps and the fires of Vesuvius, was once one of the healthiest and loveliest countries in the world, well watered and cultivated as a garden of the Lord. Notwithstanding the purity of its sky, no country in Europe received so great a quantity of rain-water; and properly directed this abundance of moisture nourished the land with the richest beauty and fertility. But the noble forests that once flanked and protected the sides of its great dorsal mountain spine were in course of time recklessly

cut down; and now places once healthy, populous, and prosperous, are converted into dry and silent deserts, or into stagnant marshes where the poisonous malaria carries off yearly a large percentage of the population, and leaves the remainder a prey to miserable listlessness and hypochondria. Let but one day's intense heat melt the snow on the Apennines, and the dry white channels that seam the bare mountain sides are filled to overflowing with raging torrents that work inconceivable mischief in the level plains. All the rivers of Italy have this character of capricious violence; and their legacy of destruction to coming generations is due to the gross ignorance or criminal neglect of those who had denuded the mountains of their forest covering. In Palestine the same melancholy state of things may be noticed. When the children of Israel entered into possession of it, it amply merited the inspired description given of it, "A land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of plains and mountains." It had an abundance of water, both from natural springs and from the clouds of heaven, in striking contrast to the one uniform supply of a single river in Egypt. But the splendid forests that covered the mountains were cut down during the frequent wars that desolated the country; and in consequence many of the springs and rivers disappeared, and the land became smitten with the curse of barrenness, and was deserted by its inhabitants. Baking and glaring in the burning sun may be seen in many a place the ruins of gardens and homesteads that once formed a beautiful oasis round a living

well; and the voice of many a spring that ran rejoicingly among the hills of Lebanon, where the Psalm from which my subject is taken was evidently composed, upon which the eyes of David and Solomon may have gazed in admiration, is now mute, since the cedars that cherished them have been cut down. The traveller now finds comparatively few of the springs and wells, that linked the ages and generations to each other, and around which had gathered all the life and human history of the neighbourhood.

Nor must we omit from this wonderful partnership in the circulation of the vital fluid of the earth, the agency of rocks. Layers of sand alternating with rocky strata imbibe and retain an immense quantity of water, which supplies the source of springs. Ordinary building stones contain a large percentage of moisture. Granite and marble are highly absorbent. Limestone contains two pints of water in every cubic foot, and as it is more pierced and more easily dissolved by the carbonic acid which the rain-water holds in solution, it forms the best of all mediums for the formation of springs and wells. Hence the abundance of fountains in the Holy Land, whose geological structure is almost entirely limestone. Even the driest rock has its pores filled with moisture like a sponge. Mountain rocks are thus vast storehouses of water, which husband and equalise the supply, and replenish the springs with unfailing regularity, independently of the varying rainfall. The old miracle is constantly performed in nature; and the rock literally yields out of its flinty sides a living stream, guarded

equally from sun and frost, so cool in summer, so warm in winter. Musing upon the wonderful harmony and reciprocity of action that exist between the mountains, the woods, the mosses, and the rocks, in the formation of springs and streams, we see a more profound and beautiful meaning in the comparison which the Psalmist makes between the dwelling together of brethren in unity and concord and the dew of heaven, which, falling upon Hermon, the highest summit, waters and refreshes all the land of Israel.

The incessant murmur of the mountain spring in the solitude speaks to the ear of the thoughtful of the wonderful rhythm of the universe. That spring seems the wayward child of uncertain parents, and yet it wells up with every beat of the pulse of nature as it has welled up for thousands of years. As the blood circulates in the body continually, so does the water circulate on the earth. The ocean sends its vapours to the mountain tops; and these vapours in the shape of streams return from the mountain tops to the ocean. The clouds move across the sky and the rivers flow along the earth in search of stable equilibrium. The waters long for rest, for a perpetual level. But this longing is never satisfied; for it is to this restlessness that we owe all the life and beauty and fruitfulness of the earth. Life is only compatible with mutation; and were this mutation to cease universal death would be the result. Not more certainly would life terminate in the body if the pulse ceased to beat, than would the world be locked in

everlasting sleep if the pulse of the mountain spring ceased to throb. And how grand is the music of nature's rhythm as she rushes along the "ringing grooves of change" to her unattainable repose. The mountain spring bubbles up its crystal waters in rhythmic gushes, like a happy-hearted maiden dancing to the music of her own young heart's delight. The ripples of the river are rhythmical as they flow in the quiet peace of an even and assured course; the waves of the ocean are rhythmical as they chase each other over the bosom of the deep, or break in thunder and foam on the shore. The two great forces that are incessantly employed in building up and pulling down the frame of nature, move to the sound of their own music. Water is everywhere musical as it wears down the mountains into Grecian regularity of outline; fire is everywhere musical as it piles up the mountains into rugged Gothic spires that pierce the heavens. The jet of flame that passes up a tube produces a sound as sweet as the tinkle of the Alpine rill. To this cadence of the whirling world, our own human hearts involuntarily beat time, and this wonderful rhythm of nature is within our own frames. Shall our free-born spirits then strike the one discordant note in this universal harmony? The streams, the winds, the flames, the woods, witness that we only are changed, that not an atom of matter sympathises with our transgression of the law of our being. Calm and grand as when the morning stars sang together in the morning of creation, Nature moves in her appointed orbit; and her blades of grass, and

grains of sand, and drops of water, tell us that we must be brought into concord with the beneficent law which they all obey so steadfastly and harmoniously or else perish. What nature thus does unconsciously and will lessly let us do consciously and willingly; and learning a lesson even from the humble voice of the mountain spring, let us make the statutes of the Lord our song in the house of our pilgrimage.

Very mysterious seems the origin of a spring as it sparkles up from the bosom of the mountain, from the heart of the rock into the sunshine. It stimulates our imagination. It seems like a new creation in the place. Through what dark fissures, through what fine veins and pores of the earth have its waters trickled to the central reservoir whose overflowing comes up to view, crystal clear and crowned with light? We do not wonder that in ancient times it should be regarded as the local haunt of some divine presence. The sites of the Grecian oracles were always beside springs, whose water gushing up from the dark depths of the earth expressively symbolised the divine voice speaking from the unseen world. And in harmony with the same idea, the Hebrew name of a prophet was derived from the bubbling forth of the waters of a spring, implying that his utterances were the irresistible overflowings of the divine fountain of inspiration in his soul. Beside the well of Sychar, incarnate in human form, in visible manifestation to the eyes of men, was the great Reality to whom all these myths and symbols pointed, who thirsted Himself that He might give us to drink. And

if our eyes be purged with spiritual eye-salve, we too shall see beside every spring the True Oracle, the Great Prophet, the Divinity of the waters who "sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills." And as the natural spring stands between the living and the dead, between the sterility of desert plains, and the bright verdure which it creates along its course; so He stands between our souls and spiritual death, between the desolation of sin and the peaceable fruits of righteousness which He enables us to produce; and speaks to us of living waters that flow from the throne of God and the Lamb, in a manner more wonderful than the birth of any naiad daughter of the mountain and the sea. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

CHAPTER IX.

MOUNTAIN PEACE.

"The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness."—PSALM LXXII. 3.

THROUGHOUT the sacred writings nature is constantly described as in profound sympathy with man. Numerous poetical allusions occur in the Psalms and prophecies in which the removal of the curse from the ground is made to depend upon the removal of the moral taint from human nature. As the woes of creation radiated from man's sin, so the restoration of creation will radiate from man's righteousness. The beauty of the redeemed soul will be reflected in the beauty of a regenerated earth; and man, having the image of God in which he was created restored to him, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, will be like another Adam in another Eden. This sympathy between the moral and physical worlds pervades the whole of the seventy-second Psalm. Through the righteous rule of the new king of Israel the physical features of the Land of Promise are pictured as

contributing to the tranquillity and happiness of its inhabitants. Their enjoyment of it is a kind of renewal of the basis of paradise. The peace of the mountains and the fertility of the valleys are God's benison made visible to a peculiar people zealous of good works.

Mountains in olden times were associated with gloom and terror. They were regarded as the waste places of creation, the outmost bounds of nature, which the imagination peopled with shapes of evil. Their bare rocks and snowy peaks, dark forests and frequent storms, repelled all human sympathies, and seemed to belong to an alien, accursed land. Scenes of grandeur which the traveller will now traverse half the globe to gaze upon with rapture, were then avoided altogether; or if necessity required that they should be visited, they were passed quickly through with shuddering dread. The peasants who inhabit the mountains are insensible to their glory. The hardness and severity of their lives hide from them the beauty and the majesty of the scenes amid which they are spent. To them the rocks and the glaciers are only sources of danger, obstructions to the cultivation of the soil, restrictions upon their pastoral labours. For them all the elements of sublimity are only suspensions of the benign and productive powers of nature; and they would prefer a green, monotonous cattle alp, or a smiling cornfield beside a quiet stream in the valley, to the wildest wonders of the barren upper heights. What is it that has changed so completely our feelings towards the mountains in these modern days? One

reason undoubtedly is the vast increase of population, and the multiplied facilities of travel. In olden times population was scanty and widely scattered; life was calm and quiet, and was passed within a narrow area, which few cared to enlarge. Nature overpowered man, and he sought relief from her constant obtrusiveness and monotony in human society; and hence he preferred scenes that reminded him of man's triumph over Nature, and of his presence and associations, to those in which Nature reigned with undisputed sway. But the enormous growth of our large cities, the vast increase of the population, spreading over the country, cultivating all the soil, and crowding every horizon with the signs of its busy industry, the hurry, excitement, and artificiality of our age—all have inspired a longing for solitude, and a taste for scenes where Nature is all in all and man is nothing. In our altered circumstances we take pleasure in what our ancestors disliked; and fleeing by railway and steamer and coach from the toil-worn haunts of men, we take refuge in the wilderness. May we not also in some measure attribute the change to the influence of a more enlightened Christianity, which has made us more alive to scenes of beauty and grandeur, apart altogether from their uses to man; which has taught us that the waste places of the earth, which our forefathers looked upon as accursed, are the sources of its health and fertility, and are even more precious than its cornfields and meadows? We are beginning to see now that nothing that God has made is in itself common or unclean, and that all the physical

earth unassociated with man's sin lies under the blessing of Heaven as truly as in the Edenic state. The mountains and the wildernesses of the earth, which our forefathers regarded as evidences of the Fall, are precisely the parts that have altogether escaped the curse upon the ground; and it is only in the garden and the field, where Nature comes into contact with man, and is made to minister to his wants, that she shares his doom.

1. In the words at the head of this chapter the Psalmist obviously referred to the security which the shelter of the mountains afforded to a God-fearing people. This is the literal meaning of the expression. The peace which the mountains give is in the first instance a peace of *safety*. On the plains man is exposed on every side to attack, and there are no natural barriers to prevent the approach of the enemy. In rude and lawless lands the dwellers of the plains live in continual alarm. They cannot cultivate the soil in peace; they cannot be sure of their possessions for a single day. The farmers in the more level and fertile parts of Palestine at the present day sow and reap their fields in bands, to defend themselves and their harvests from marauders; and this fact lends a new emphasis and meaning to the words of the Psalmist referring to those who sow in tears and go forth weeping, bearing precious seed. Dwellers in the plains must fortify their houses if they live alone, and if in communities they must surround their towns and villages with walls and moats. But among the mountains Nature herself surrounds man's home with ramparts of defence and

guards his possessions. The only strife he has to fear is that of the elements. Surrounded by lofty precipices, containing hidden recesses that can only be reached with great toil and difficulty, mountains have always been the strongholds of freedom, where patriotism has taken its last stand, and religion has found a secure sanctuary, and the tide of conquest that has elsewhere swept everything before it has found an iron shore that hurled it back. Wretched tribes, gradually driven up through oppression from their native fields, have there maintained the last struggle of despair against the overwhelming foe. Just as the alpine flowers that grow on the mountains are the last survivors of the general flora that spread over the whole country, driven up from the plains by altered conditions of climate and elevation, so mountain tribes are for the most part the survivors of communities forced to abandon the low lands, and to take refuge from their enemies on the inaccessible heights. The little faithful flock of the Waldenses found, among the lofty snow-crowned Alps that shut them in on every side, protection when sorely persecuted by the armies of the Pope, and almost every spot in their magnificent mountain home has been hallowed by some marvellous triumph of faith and spiritual heroism. The Scottish Covenanters sought refuge on the wild moors from a hostile bloodthirsty government; and often did the voice of prayer and the song of praise mingle with the plaintive breeze that swept over the bleak hillsides, and ascend from many a desolate spot to Him who sits enthroned above

the everlasting hills, and lends His ear to the cry of the poor and needy. To these godly people the mountains brought the peace of safety, because of their righteousness.

Especially were the mountains places of defence to the Jews. They were the Waldenses and Covenanters of the old world, who protested against the heathenism of the outlying nations, and therefore exposed themselves to their hatred and persecution. The land of Israel was an alpine land, an elevated plateau, guarded on every side by lofty mountain, deep defile, pathless desert, or stormy sea. It was like a great altar lifted above the plains, on which the incense of divine worship went up continually. God provided for His people a mountain fortress, where they should be secure from attack, and be enabled, uncontaminated by association with the surrounding idolaters, to maintain the pure religion of Jehovah, and work out His great purposes for the conversion and education of the human race. In that eagle-like eyrie, high above the plains of Babylon and the desert of Syria, and the rich valley of the Nile, their place of defence was the munitions of rocks; bread was given to them, and their water was sure. The mountains brought peace to them so long as they lived in righteousness. But no sooner did they follow the multitude outside to do evil, and, corrupted by the example of idolaters, forsake the worship of the living God, than their mountain home became the scene of the wildest tumult and disorder. The rocks that should have defended them hemmed them in for surer and

swifter destruction; the heights on which they should have sat under their own vine and fig-tree, with none to make them afraid, were crimsoned, not with the blood of the grape, but with the blood of innocent women and children; and the echoes of the hills, instead of repeating the gentle voices of nature, the sigh of the breeze, and the murmur of the torrent, or the pleasant sounds of rural labour, were startled by shrieks of anguish from desolated homes. Never were there fiercer battles and darker tragedies than among the fair solitudes of those mountains, which God had set as a wall lifted up to heaven round about Jerusalem, when in wrath He removed His protecting shield from a people who desired not the knowledge of His ways. Syrian, Assyrian, and Egyptian came one after another into their most secure fortresses by the passes of the Lebanon, and taught them the bitter lesson that the loftiest mountains afford no asylum to those who violate the laws of righteousness. The mountain land itself spued out its inhabitants, refused to harbour a race that had proved faithless to its God. And in the Songs of Degrees, the Pilgrim Psalms, the wailing music of the harp hung on the willow-trees of Babylon, we hear the longing of the poor exiles for their own beautiful mountain land. "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help."

But while this is the literal meaning of the Psalmist's expression—"the mountains shall bring peace to the people"—it may be lawful to treat it figuratively, and hang a few appropriate thoughts regarding other kinds

of mountain peace upon it. In the Holy Land every object was as typical of spiritual things as every article in the tabernacle and temple. The one embodied the typical dispensation of Nature, as the other the typical dispensation of grace. In fact the Holy Land was the tabernacle of the earth, the chamber of imagery of the whole world, in which everything pointed to God, and was significant of the soul's relations to Him and to itself. The truths of the Bible were moulded and coloured by the natural characteristics of the country in which it was written. The land was the picture which illustrated the book; the revelation of natural things explained the revelation of spiritual things. The heights and depths of the landscapes signified the heights and depths of the soul. The hills represented the high places of faith and righteousness which men ought to reach; the valleys and defiles represented the deep places of moral degradation into which men fall. The heights of Jerusalem, on which stood the temple of God, with its pure, free air, and its wide commanding prospects, typified the highest attainments of holiness and happiness; and the profound abyss in which lay the Dead Sea, whose waters had closed over the guilty cities of the plain, with its hot stagnant air, and rank vegetation, and memories of gigantic sin and terrible doom, typified the lowest depths of wickedness and misery. There, before the eyes of men, were visible types of heaven and hell. The people went up to the Holy Hill to worship God and practise righteousness; they went down to the dark defile to sin and

suffer. Thus these two opposite scenes of nature helped them to understand their own experience and history, and taught them that to be up in the moral nature of man is to be pure and blessed, while to be down is to be sinful and unhappy. Each Jew was thus led to see in nature a reflection of his own condition, a picture of his own soul.

2. According to this law of correspondence, the peace which the mountains give by righteousness is a peace of *elevation.* It is on the heights of the soul alone that we can get true and lasting peace. Like the man in the parable who went down to Jericho, and who was stripped and wounded on that downward path, so on the low levels of our sense-life on which we are trying to live, we are stripped and wounded by the evils of life, and impoverished by its circumstances. We have left behind us in our natural state the lofty city of holiness in which we were born, and have gone down to the low polluted city of the curse, as the traveller descended from Jerusalem to Jericho. Our moral career has run parallel with our physical. Mankind descended from the cradle of the race on the lofty mountain ranges of Central Asia to the level plains of Assyria and Egypt; and so has the race spiritually descended from the eternal hills of God to the mean levels of worldly conformity and carnal indulgence. We have gone down from a state of elevated purity and blessedness to one of degraded sinfulness and misery; and in the cities of the plain we are lovers of pleasure and pursue many objects of interest,

and surround ourselves with many comforts and possessions, and say "peace, peace." But there is no true peace for immortal souls that settle down contentedly into the low, dead, carnal uniformity into which our natural life so readily falls. Cares and temptations assail us. We become dissatisfied with our circumstances, and most of all with ourselves. Whether we succeed or fail in our objects, we are alike disappointed; and a profound feeling of weariness and vanity oppresses us. The mysteries and troubles of life perplex and bewilder us, and the current of our days flows sluggishly and despairingly through them, as an African river creeps through its tangled thicket of reeds, in which the traveller is so hopelessly involved that he imagines all the world to be an endless reedy marsh. It is only when we ascend to the lost heights of our purity by the successive stages of a life of faith in the Son of God, that we regain the true peace of our souls. The ascent is indeed difficult; the path straight, narrow, and steep. But every new achievement will be a vantage-ground for fresh effort. On stepping-stones of our dead selves, on mortified lusts and sanctified affections, and trials turned to heavenly uses, we mount to higher things, and every step upward brings us to purer air, and to a grander and freer horizon. To go up physically, is to alter climate and natural productions, to pass vertically through the zones of the globe; to go up spiritually, is to inhabit a new world of joys and hopes. And if our sweat of soul be great, our peace of soul will keep pace with it.

On the mountain heights of faith we are above the changes of the world. We look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. Our being ranges beyond all the limitations of time and sense—beyond the bounds which the cares and troubles of life set to it. And therefore we feel calm and secure amid the whirl of circumstances. Hearkening habitually to the voice of God and so dwelling on high, we dwell safely and are quiet from fear of evil. We have a peace which the world cannot give. We are inhabitants even here and now of that world where there is no succession of existence, and consequently no change—where no suns go down, no fruits decay, no years wax old and dim. On the mountain heights of faith, too, we have a brighter sky overhead, and a clearer prospect around. Clouds and mists hang ever over the low levels of life; but above them there is sunshine, if only we can mount high enough. If we crawl about on the dreary flats of earth, content to rise no higher, then, though a ray of sunshine may sometimes reach us, we shall never pass the cloud, or know the boundless light of God. Professor Piazzi Smythe, in his *Astronomical Expedition to the Peak of Teneriffe*, mentions that while the inhabitants of the sea-shore had the most dreadful weather, constant clouds, rain, and howling winds, he and his party at the summit of the mountain had a cloudless sky, brilliant sunshine, and the most serene and delicious air. And so it is in the spiritual world; storms rage on the low levels, but the blue

tops of the hills are calm in the sunshine of heaven, and smile above the thunderstorm. The soul that dwells habitually on high, has a perpetual summer. It has a buoyancy and brightness which lift it above all glooms and depressions. It is a striking circumstance that our Saviour spoke joyfully of His decease on the mount of transfiguration, but was exceeding sorrowful even unto death at the prospect before Him down in the gloomy olive shadows of Gethsemane. Every height of the soul is a mount of transfiguration, where sorrow, like the dark clouds or the barren fields of snow on a mountain top incarnadined by sunset, takes on the hues of heaven. But such heights of faith belong only to the latest formations of the soul. The highest mountains of the earth are the youngest, and have been thrown up to their serene altitudes by volcanic forces; so also the loftiest heights of faith and hope are the most recent experiences of the renewed life, and are often raised up by fiery trials that are most grievous at the time. It was through a lifetime of sore trial that the Man of Sorrows acquired the majestic peace which He bequeathed in the end to His disciples: "My peace I give unto you." They stood on the calm, lofty vantage-ground which He had won by strong crying and tears.

3. I go on to notice further that the peace which the mountains give by righteousness is a peace of *compensation*. In the mountain peak the earth is acuminated to the smallest point. On the level plain the earth fills the whole horizon, but it narrows as we

ascend, until the summit of the mountain becomes a small island in space. On that elevated spot there is little more than standing-room. The wide and varied landscape around our home has diminished into a few feet of grey, monotonous rock; and nothing reminds us of the common familiar world in which we live. But while the earth contracts the sky expands, and on the mountain height where the world is smallest the heavens seem infinite. Nowhere else can such a boundless view of the sky be obtained as where the earth affords only a pedestal on which the spectator may stand. And what a wonderful peace enters into the heart on such a spot! How far off seems the world of cares and struggles; how near the land of rest! How small and unworthy of attention are the things that worried and perplexed us; how grand and magnificent the things that belong to our true peace! The covetousness and selfishness which sought to grasp everything lessen with the lessening sphere for their exercise; and here, where man possesses no more of the soil than that on which his foot rests, he has a peace which the ownership of the whole world could not give him. And is there not a parallel to this in spiritual experience? God often narrows our standing-place among the world's possessions and affections that we may have a grander outlook, a wider expansion of the everlasting inheritance. Each privation of earth becomes a fuller realisation of heaven. Poverty of circumstances,—as we see in nature the glacier and the storm sculpturing the wide tableland into pyramidal form,—may shape a mountain peak in the

sphere of the soul, by removing the worldly grounds of hope and confidence with which we encompass ourselves. And a man may be raised above the world by that which depresses him below its level; the depths of his outward possessions becoming the heights of his being. Who were the men who saw most of heaven? Were they not those who possessed least of the earth? It was the patriarchs, who did not own so much as their feet could stand upon of the soil of Canaan, who dwelt in tents as strangers on its upland pastures with their families and flocks, who nevertheless saw all the true beauty and enjoyed all the true wealth of the land, and who looked beyond its fleeting possessions to the glory of the heavenly inheritance of which it spoke so eloquently to them. Abraham, standing on the stony top of Bethel, and lifting up his eyes to behold the rich plains and well-watered valleys glowing in the Syrian sunshine as the garden of the Lord, owned them in a truer sense than the idolatrous occupiers of them, who cared only for them as they ministered to their carnal life. Moses surveying the Land of Promise with dying eyes from the threshold of Pisgah entered into possession of it in spirit, though it was not permitted him to enter it in person. To St. John, chained a prisoner on his little barren rock in the Ægean, the wonderful visions of the Apocalypse were given through the door opened in heaven. When we are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, the earth expands around us and becomes our heaven; we say, "This is our rest for ever; here will

we dwell, for we have desired it." But when our friends and possessions pass away from us, and leave us bare and empty, the earth around us contracts into a mountain peak, and we have the grandest outlook into the things eternal. The Lord graciously leads all His people by the weaning dispensations of Providence as far as to Bethany, that from the narrowest point of earth they may with the least effort and wrench pass into the waiting heavens with Himself. Life itself, whether we build the pyramid of jasper or of common clay, however broad we make its base, mercifully narrows to the top; and as on our upward path we successively leave behind us the beauty and joy of childhood, and the strength of manhood, and the few interests that survive, like pale flowers on the alpine turf, to those days in which we shall say that we have no pleasure in them—as all things fall away from us, and leave us on our little narrow standing-place amid the cold, barren snows of old age, eternity is seen to be more and more beneath us as well as around us and above us; the heavenly world becomes more and more part of our own home, and the transition in the end is easy and immediate.

4. But I notice, further, that this peace is a peace of *unification*. From the top of a mountain we behold the wide landscape as a whole. Its varied features and inequalities of surface are blended into one magnificent picture. The most distant points are brought together, and the most discordant elements are harmonised. From the top of a lofty equatorial mountain we see all

the zones and climates of the earth, all the seasons of the year, and all the constellations of the sky at a single glance. And it is because a mountain summit thus brings together and unifies what down in the plain is far separated, that we have such peculiar pleasure in the extended prospect. It reveals to us the greatness of our being, which has been formed for unity, for a state in which things here dispersed shall be gathered into one. We are here in a state of unnatural compression, and existence within our narrow limits is measured out to us in successive portions, so that we cannot gain one point without leaving behind and losing sight of another. But in the eternal world for which we are destined, all that our heart desires will be brought together and presented to us in the fulness and unity of our being at one view. The prospect from the mountain top therefore enables us to anticipate our future life. And what we thus experience in the physical world, we also realise in the mental and spiritual. Every advance we make in the intellectual and moral life tends to place us on a higher ground, from whence our eye can take in a wider horizon, and thus bring larger and larger portions of the past and future into the present. From the lofty vantage-ground of our knowledge we have a wider survey over the history of the world and of the race than our ancestors had; and the cultivated man lives within a wider sphere of space and time than the ignorant serf, whose mind can take in no wider reach of thought than his own poor daily life. And the Christian has the grandest survey of all. His faith

places him on a spiritual eminence from whence he sees the pains and losses that, owing to the laws of his successive existence, he feels singly, blended with the rest of his life; and thus the lights balance the shades, the deliverance is seen side by side with the danger, the trial with its alleviation, and the temptation with the way of escape, and the whole landscape of life consequently appears beautiful and harmonious. On the Mount of the Lord he sees the converging movements and the network of connection which unify into one great purpose and blessed service the confusing fragmentary medley of things amid which our daily work is done. There he sees the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful, the termination of all the paths by which He is leading us, and recognises that they are mercy and truth to those who fear Him. And the wider the view the more perfect the harmony. The faith that takes in the widest reach of our being comprehends both worlds, that which now is and that which is to come—has the promise of them now—and can always pass from the discords of earth to

"Where beyond these voices there is peace."

On these heights of salvation too we are above all party feeling and sectarian jealousy. There are *isotherms* of faith and love on those mountain tops where all Christians are one, and all faces belonging to different dispensations and denominations are seen shining transfigured in the same heavenly light.

5. I shall conclude with one other idea—viz. that

this mountain peace is a peace of *isolation*. It is well that we have the mountains as retreats from the fevered conventional life of cities. They cannot be subdued by man or taken into his domains. They form a world apart, a sanctuary of nature, which can never be crowded or profaned, claiming affinity with the nearer heavens. They are God's cathedrals not made with hands, where man does not live by bread alone, but by the visions of beauty and grandeur in which the Creator speaks to the soul. Nowhere can we find such haunts of immemorial peace as among their recesses. Even gazing upon the mountains afar off, as their softly rounded outlines repose on the horizon, with the shadows of the clouds resting upon them, or the purple hues of evening transfiguring them, they seem the very embodiments of peace; and the sight is enough to infuse a sympathetic feeling of peace into the heart of the most careworn spectator. But when we penetrate into their hidden nooks, the great mother there takes us back to her bosom, and lays her cool hand upon our throbbing brow, and hushes our fevered pulses to rest in the depths of her silence; we know the sleep that is among the lonely hills, and have dreams of more than mortal beauty to which it gives rise. The bush of the desert becomes the shrine of God; the still small voice of the wind among the rocks and pines whispers the secrets of the unseen world; and the vistas through the level clouds that, burnished with gold, lie along the mountain tops, seem doors opened in heaven. It is good to seek the loneliness and serenity of the mountains, there to

leave behind us our own thoughts, and to relinquish our own wills, and allow ourselves to be moulded passively by the solemn inspirations of the solitude. Cares and troubles thus melt away, and calmness rises into a religious experience. The greatest names in history prepared themselves for their life-work by solitary communion with God on the mountains: Moses on Horeb; Elijah on Carmel, and St. Paul among the granite peaks of Arabia. And they took down with them into the world's busy works and ways the light of heaven upon their faces and the peace of heaven in their hearts. The calm serenity which strikes us with wonder in the faces painted by Fra Angelico, Raphael, and Perugino, was acquired in the loneliness of those mountain cloisters to which the noisy echoes of the world did not penetrate, and which heard only the still small voices of the upper sanctuary; and we can attain to the beauty of their angelic peace only by imitating the loneliness and elevation of their lives.

But there are spiritual heights of the soul as well as material heights of nature on which we find a sacred solitude and peace. The higher a man rises in spiritual as in intellectual life, the more lonely he becomes. There is always, as it has been often said, a degree of solitude about a great man; and this is especially true of the Christian, whose greatness is reflected upon him by the contemplation of the things unseen and eternal. It is his distinguishing characteristic that he is not of the world, that his citizenship is in heaven, and the more renewed he is in the spirit of his mind, the more

separate from the world does he become. He prefers the closet even to the crowded religious meeting, and is never less alone than when most alone. When he leaves behind the mount that might be touched with its crowds and distractions, he comes to Mount Zion, and is compassed about with a great cloud of spiritual witnesses. When earth recedes, heaven opens to his view, and he exchanges the companionship of flesh and blood that wearies for the association of those heavenly principalities in waiting upon whom his face is lightened and his strength is renewed. Such a man dwells on God's holy hill alike when, clothed in the garments of beauty and glory, he worships and serves in the priestly office, and when as an ordinary citizen, girded for toil, he fulfils the common duties of life. He can seek the things that are above in seeking that which is purest, highest, and noblest even in the sphere of nature and of ordinary human life; and at all times and in all circumstances his life can preserve its vital relationship with heaven, and the mountain-heights of his faith and love and holy obedience will bring him peace by righteousness.

CHAPTER X.

LEAVEN.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."—ST. MATTHEW XIII. 33.

NOT more frequently did our Lord appeal to the Old Testament of the Written Word in the formula "It is written" than He appealed to the Older Testament of created objects in the formula "The kingdom of heaven is like unto" different objects and processes of the natural world. That kingdom is not of this world—so far as the source of its power and authority is concerned; it is essentially of heaven and from heaven. But it is of this world so far as the sphere of its influence is concerned, and it covers the whole ground of its objects and affairs, just as the blue sky covers the whole earth. Not more essential to the order, beauty, and life of the earth is the all embracing sky that bends over it than is the kingdom of heaven to the kingdoms of this world with which it is coextensive. For its gracious design is to remove

all the limitations and disabilities which sin has brought upon them—and make all old things new; to form the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; beginning in man its head, and going down to all with which man is connected. And this universal reference of the kingdom of heaven is clearly indicated by the very multiplicity of the objects and processes with which our Saviour compares it. It is not like one thing only, but like a great many things as diverse as possible from each other; the examples given being only a few specimens of what might have been indefinitely increased. And they are given in such variety, not merely because no single object or process could exhaust for purposes of comparison the *pleroma* or fulness of the kingdom of heaven, or adequately foreshadow its glory and intricacy of relationships, but also, and chiefly, because the kingdom of heaven is in truth like everything in this world that is not of sin. For He who made man in the image of God made earth in the image of heaven; and it is distinctly stated that all things were made by the Second Person of the Trinity in His mediatorial character and for redemption purposes, and that without Him was not anything made that was made.

The parable of the leaven belongs to a distinct group of seven parables which may be separated from the others which our Lord spoke, not merely because they occur consecutively in the same chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, but also because they have close mutual relations to one another, and constitute together a complete and harmonious whole. They illustrate the history of the

kingdom of heaven in its announcement and reception upon the earth, the different steps and laws of its advancement both externally and internally, in societies and individuals, from its commencement to its consummation. They may be arranged in pairs, each pair having a closer affinity to its own members than to the others. Thus the twin parables of the Sower and the Tares are most intimately knit together, referring to the different fortunes of the seed of the kingdom when sown in the field of the world, and to the intermixture of evil with it even when it germinates and grows up in good soil. In like manner the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven constitute a distinct pair, illustrating, the one the outward or extensive, and the other the inward or intensive, development of the kingdom of heaven; increasing in magnitude from small and unimportant beginnings, and overshadowing the whole earth, visible to the eyes of all, at the same time that its vital spirit silently and secretly progresses within, gradually changing the character of the whole of that into which it has been infused.

The parable of the Mustard Seed is essentially an out-door parable, and has all the freedom and magnitude of the open air about it. The parable of the Leaven belongs to the house, and introduces us into the privacy of the domestic circle. The one refers to the large outward life of nature, and the other to the small inner life of the human household. The one is more objective, the other more subjective. The home of man and the world of God are thus both to experience the sanctifying

and renewing influences of the kingdom of heaven, and to be the sphere of its operations.

A difficulty meets us on the very threshold of our inquiry into the significance of the parable of the leaven, suggested by the fact that this material is more frequently employed in Scripture in a bad than in a good sense. It was rigidly excluded from all the Levitical offerings as an unclean thing. The children of Israel were strictly commanded to remove every particle of it from their houses during the Passover week; and owing to these restrictions, it came to be regarded as the type or symbol of all that was false and corrupting. It seems somewhat perplexing therefore that with all these evil associations our Lord should have employed it as a symbol of the pure and glorious development of the kingdom of heaven. But this objection disappears at once when we bear in mind that it is common in Scripture to employ one object in nature to shadow forth two opposite spiritual truths. "Be ye wise as serpents," said Christ to His disciples, although He himself had employed the image of a serpent in a most evil sense. The same symbol of a lion is applied by St. Peter to the devil, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and by St. John to Christ, who is the lion of the tribe of Judah. Hence it was not out of keeping for our Lord to employ an object in a good sense which had hitherto been used in a bad sense. Indeed, it is characteristic of His whole work to recover the things of nature and of man from their former ignominy and consecrate them to higher uses, so that the darkest tokens of the

fall are changed into the brightest images of redemption—the thorns of the curse becoming the very Crown of Christ. And therefore we can easily understand how, while leaven stood previously associated in the minds of the Jews with all that was corrupting and debasing, our Lord should bid His audience look at its good qualities, making bread lighter, more palatable, and more easily digested, and for the sake of these useful properties employ it Himself as a symbol of the kingdom of heaven.

But while this reason for our Lord's choice of such an apparently incongruous image appears on the surface, and is obvious to every one, a yet deeper reason may be found, if we consider for a little the nature and effects of the leaven in the natural world. And this will not only remove all embarrassment from the parable, but also reveal to us a new beauty and significance in it. For it is the unique distinction of all Christ's words, that they are truer and profounder than they appear, and link themselves harmoniously with the universal and absolute truth; and therefore every new discovery of science, every deeper investigation into the mysteries of this wonderful world of ours, gives them a wider scope and a more suggestive meaning.

No process is so familiar and commonplace as bread-making. It has been performed and witnessed times without number from the earliest infancy of our race. As a practical detail of housekeeping it is so easy that a child understands it; but it involves mysteries which are among the most recondite

in the whole range of science, and which are only now beginning to be fully understood. The wonderful discovery is little more than a century old, that the yeast or leaven which is put into the dough to raise it and make it more light and nutritious, is in reality a mass of active living cells each about the 3,000th of an inch in diameter, performing within itself all the functions of life and multiplying by self-division. These minute cells, which constitute living matter in almost its simplest condition, grow and propagate with inconceivable rapidity; a single cubic inch of yeast during the heat of fermentation containing upwards of eleven hundred and fifty-two millions of them. The name of yeast-plant, or Torula, was given to these cells; but they do not constitute distinct plants. They are only a particular rudimentary state of a fungus or mould, like that with which every one is familiar, as it covers with a greenish grey powder or a whitish flocculent down all kinds of decaying substances in damp shady places that are seldom disturbed—a pair of old shoes, a pot of preserves, or a piece of stale bread or fruit. When the germs of this mould fall into any liquid containing sugar and sink below its surface, they produce the cells or globules of the yeast which, when they grow to their full size, immediately begin to give off little buds from their sides; these buds in their turn growing until they attain the size of their parents, and then giving off other buds, a process of budding by multiplication going on in this way to any extent, as effectual and complete as that which takes place in a strawberry-bed or on an apple-

tree. But when the food which the liquid contains is exhausted, and the liquid itself is partially dried up, these cells will vegetate, and throw out processes which will produce a whitish filmy crust, from which in due time will rise up a forest of little snowy stems crowned with the fructification, presenting the well-known appearance of the common mould. The effect of the fungus in its undeveloped condition as a mass of separate bead-like cells immersed in the liquid is very different from that which it produces in its more advanced state when growing exposed to the air upon the surface of the liquid. As yeast in the liquid, it is deprived of a full supply of oxygen, and produces fermentation; as the mature fungus on the surface of the liquid absorbing oxygen from the air, it produces putrefaction. In the one case it breathes after the manner of plants, taking the oxygen necessary for its respiration from the sugar in solution, converting it by so doing into alcohol; in the other, it breathes the free oxygen of the air after the manner of an animal, and by the combination of the oxygen thus absorbed with the carbon and other elements of the substance upon which it feeds, it keeps up in it a process of putrefaction. Each cell of the yeast-plant may be said to exhibit vegetable and animal characteristics. Its walls have the same composition as the substance of wood; and its innner nucleus is identical with the material which forms the chief part of our own blood, and is of the same nature as the substance which lies at the foundation of every animal organism whatever. The process of germination

in the plant and of digestion in the animal is analogous to that of the yeast on its nidus. And surely it is a curious thought that the leaven by which we prepare our bread and the leaven or gastric juice by which we digest it when eaten are similar in their nature and operation; both being living cells in all essential respects alike, although the one is a vegetable and the other an animal substance. Alike in the rudimentary condition of yeast and in the mature condition of mould, the plant reproduces itself with the greatest readiness, and its germs are thrown off in such enormous quantities that it is difficult to conceive of any place where they do not occur. The air is constantly full of them; and it is impossible to expose any vegetable juice or saccharine solution to the air without these little bodies entering into it, and if the conditions be favourable, beginning at once an active life, increasing and multiplying and giving rise to any quantity of yeast.

In the dough the leaven of course operates in the same way as it does in a sugary fluid. The swelling and commotion which take place in the leavened mass are owing to the rapid multiplication of the cells of the mould-plant. Excluded from the oxygen of the air, fermentation is induced, by which the starch and sugar of the dough are converted, in the nourishing of the plant-cells, into alcohol and carbonic acid gas, which last manifests itself in the miniature air-bells which pervade the substance and give the light porous appearance to the bread. Were the process of cell multiplication allowed to go on unchecked, it would

decompose all the substance of the dough, and the plant would finally appear upon its surface in its complete form as a fleecy mould, and, having access to free oxygen, produce putrefaction. But at this initiatory stage the principle of growth is arrested by the heat of the oven into which the dough is put to be baked into bread.

We thus see that leaven is connected with the two familiar processes of fermentation and putrefaction, which are of such vast importance in the economy of nature and art, according to its stage of development, and as it is excluded from oxygen or has free access to it. In every stage of development it is in itself a principle of destruction and construction — of decay and growth — of death and life. According to the "germ theory," which is now generally adopted, the infection of disease in the human frame is produced by the same kind of objects that cause the infection of the leaven in the dough or the saccharine fluid. The particles of disease are supposed to be fungoid germs having a certain life of their own, which in their development in the human system produce the serious disturbances which we call fever, cholera, &c., and which can be transmitted from one person to another in the same way that the yeast-plant can be transmitted from one substance to another. What ministers to nourishment and life in one form, may thus minister to disease and death in another. The leaven that makes our bread palatable and nutritious may poison our blood and cause us untold suffering.

These two opposite effects are made use of as types in Scripture. On the one side the operation of leaven upon meal presents an analogy to something evil in the spiritual world, for it decays and decomposes the matter with which it comes into contact. On the other side the operation of leaven upon the meal presents an analogy to something good in the spiritual world, for it is a principle of life and growth and imparts a new energy and a beneficent quality to the matter with which it comes into contact. Hence we can see more clearly than before why Christ at one and the same time should, without any sense of self-contradiction, bid His disciples beware of the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees, and compare the kingdom of heaven to leaven hid in three measures of meal. The kingdom of heaven itself has two aspects; it is a principle of growth and decay, of construction and destruction. It is life unto life in those who receive it, it is death unto death in those who reject it; as the same air that nourishes our bodies when living decomposes them when dead. Nay, in the same person it is at one and the same time a principle of life and of death, of growth and decay; for the new man lives by the death of the old man; the spiritual life grows while the carnal life decays; the outward man perishes while the inward man is renewed more and more.

I have thus shown what science has only recently revealed to us, that leaven is not as was formerly supposed dead matter infecting other matter with its own corruption, a lifeless substance producing a mere chemical

change upon another substance with which it comes into contact, but on the contrary a living principle, a collection of living organisms that manifest all the signs and carry on all the functions of life, and that its effect upon the dough is a vital process. It is true indeed that leaven decays and decomposes the meal in which it is hid; but it does this in order to nourish the life which it contains, just as every plant decays and decomposes the particles of the soil and the elements around it in order to sustain its life and growth; just as we ourselves decay and decompose the particles of food that we eat by the gastric juice in order to support our bodies. The innumerable microscopic cells of the leaven grow in the meal as their soil, in precisely the same way that the corn grows in the field, and the mustard-tree in the wood. It assimilates the particles of the meal and changes these dead effete substances into its own living tissues, and makes them to live and grow in a new form; just as the corn takes up the particles of the soil formed by the decaying remains of former plants, and converts them into living structures in its own living substance. And thus we get a glimpse of the grand purpose which the minute and humble plants, of which the cells in the leaven constitute but one variety, perform in the great economy of nature. They accelerate the process of natural decay and render the natural products of that process less baneful by absorbing them into their own life. They economise the stock of organised material which has been slowly gained from the earth, air, and water, by preventing

it from going back through decomposition to the mineral state, and preserving it in an organic form to be at once made available for the purposes of higher animal and plant life. It is not death therefore that we see at work in the effects of leaven upon dough, reducing everything to its own dust and nothingness, but life victorious over death—turning death into higher life—raising dead substances into new forms of energy and power, and stamping them with its own image.

And looked at in this light, how forcible and beautiful an illustration of the kingdom of heaven is the leaven! That kingdom is life, the highest of all life; and all its effects are processes and results of life. It does not work mechanically, but vitally. It is that divine power which saves from going down to the pit; which prevents the wreck of humanity by the fall from becoming a greater wreck still; which hinders that which was made in the image of God and which sin has blighted and wasted, from corrupting into the outer darkness of eternal destruction; and takes it back and lifts it up into the higher life of heaven and makes it capable of nobler work in God's world. The kingdom of heaven is the spiritual life that broods over a world dead and lying in wickedness, and raises its dark, hopeless chaos into the beauty, order and sunlight of the new creation. And just as the living seed of the plant in a barren, sandy desert where no green thing is found changes the lifeless sand into living vegetation, so does the spiritual and eternal life of the kingdom of heaven

raise by its quickening energy the dead souls of men with which it comes into contact, into newness of life in Christ Jesus.

The leaven is not the same as the meal upon which it operates. The meal is a dead, inert substance which left to itself would moulder away into dust or impalpable gases. It is indeed an organised material, the product of former life, but separated from the corn upon which it grew, and ground in the mill, it has lost all the powers and properties of life. It can therefore enter the circle of life and perform its part there again only by becoming leavened by another substance that has life. There is no such thing in nature as spontaneous generation. Scientific men have fought hard over the question; and now it is all but universally admitted that no living change can take place in any substance without the agency of previous life; that dead matter cannot originate life under any circumstances whatever, and begin itself the processes of life in its own substance. The meal is leavened not by a spontaneous change begun in itself—by itself—but by the introduction into it of the germs of life from another source. And this fact is emphatically indicated in the parable by the woman taking the leaven and mingling it with the meal. She took the leaven from elsewhere and placed it in the dough. The living cells that constitute the leaven have not been generated within the substance in which they are found. They owe their origin to the germs of other pre-existing yeast organisms. Boil the substance and effectually exclude the air, and there will be no appearance of living cells,

no fermentation. The substance will remain inert and unchanged for years. On the contrary, expose it to the air, and living germs will at once establish themselves, and the process of fermentation begin. Moreover, the yeast itself must be alive in order to exert its peculiar properties. If it be crushed or heated to such an extent that its life is destroyed, it will not produce any leavening effect. And how true is this feature of the parable when applied in illustration of the kingdom of heaven. Man, like the meal, is the wreck of former life. Separated from God from whom he derived his life, withered and blighted by sin, ground between the millstones of the hard service of the god of this world, he has lost all the properties and powers of spiritual life. He cannot by any process of self-reformation, of study or self-denial, or performance of duty, originate spiritual life in himself or enter into the spiritual world, and regain the divine image and power which he has lost. There is no such thing as spontaneous generation in the spiritual world any more than in the natural. Prayers and penances and self-efforts will prove of no avail to quicken and renew the soul that is alienated from God and dead in trespasses and sin. Self-salvation in the human world is impossible. No man can redeem his brother or even his own soul from destruction. A mightier power than his own must begin and carry on the work of grace in him. He who is the life must commence the process of life in his inert, corrupt nature; must be Himself the beginning of the new creation of God in him. Jesus must breathe upon

fallen man that he may be a new creature, just as He breathed into his nostrils at first the breath of natural life. The kingdom of heaven that comes to him and works within him is a divine, unearthly power, a heavenly principle altogether different from any power or principle in himself. It is not of this world; it does not spring from the earth. It is not a philosophy of man's reasoning, a natural process of mere human development, a force of his own creation; but a revelation from heaven, the power of God unto salvation, brought into the world and into the heart of man from the life and death of the Son of God.

It will be observed that in the parable the leaven is said to be *hid* in the meal; and this is an essential condition of its operation. It is not necessary that a particle of leaven should actually come into contact with every particle of the mass. It is only necessary to start the process of change in a single spot in order that it may permeate the whole lump, but that spot must be in the centre. Were the leaven merely applied to the surface of the dough, it would fail to find there the principle and the conditions for its development and would become inert. But placed in the centre, it is in the proper position to exert its influence. And so is it with the kingdom of heaven. That kingdom comes into superficial contact with every human being who hears the gospel, but it is only effectual when it is personally appropriated and hid in the heart. The great reason why the gospel of Christ is so inoperative in the world is because it only touches the outside of men, as it were,

comes into contact merely with their senses and their intellect. They keep it at arm's length even by the very respect they pay to it, even by the performance of its duties, and attendance upon its means of grace, as the ceremonial of a court keeps a monarch apart from his subjects. To exert its renewing and transforming power, therefore, it must find lodgment in the inmost sanctuary of our being. It must begin its work of grace in the very citadel of sin, in the heart and in the conscience. It was in the secret fountains from which our being issues that the awful evil of sin which has corrupted and defiled us originated; and it is there that the kingdom of heaven must grapple with and destroy it. It was by a deliberate and decisive act of the will that man separated himself from God; by the act of the will only can he be restored; and therefore the kingdom of heaven must work directly upon his will and change it. It does not in the first instance act upon our outward conduct or reach us through our senses; it goes straight to the heart, and there it works from within outwardly, from the centre to the circumference. As the leaven is hid in three measures of meal, this may imply that the kingdom of heaven sanctifies the three parts of our complex human nature, body, soul, and spirit. Beginning in the soul and changing it into a new creature, its effects extend to the body, elevating its type, refining and ennobling its expression, and altering the use of its members from instruments of sin into instruments of righteousness. It then reaches the circumstances of man, going out in ever-widening ripples to

all connected with him, his interests and relations, his intercourse with the world, the conduct of his business, and the very tilling of the ground.

But the hiding of the leaven among the dough points to the *secret* as well as to the internal development of the kingdom of heaven. For a long time the hidden working of the leaven is unknown; the lump is apparently unaffected; there is little or no visible effect until at length it is found that the whole loaf is thoroughly leavened. And was it not so with the commencement of the history of the gospel in the world? The kingdom that came not with observation; the kingdom of that God whose glory it is to conceal a matter, worked in the hearts of men unseen and unknown for a long time. Below the surface of society, which was calm and unruffled by its impulse, its mighty change was going on. No flourish of trumpets sounded its coming, no powerful array of means was employed to establish it. A few poor and obscure men were the apparently inadequate instruments by whom it silently and irresistibly worked its way into the hearts and affections of all classes of the community. Not by miraculous agency—causing all men to wonder,—for the power of working miracles was soon withdrawn from the Church,—did the gospel win its way, but according to the established laws of mind, and owing to its own adaptation to human wants and experiences. How little did the proud heathen world know that it nourished within its own bosom a mightier than itself, which was destined to overthrow it by transforming it into a Christian world? How

little did the Roman world know that the very households of its Cæsars were filled with its saints; that "the very ground beneath the streets of the imperial city was honeycombed with the long galleries of the Catacombs, wherein were laid thousands of those who had already lived and died in the faith of the crucified Nazarene." And as it was thus with the early course of the gospel in the world, so is it in regard to its commencement in every individual heart. It is there also a hidden process for a time; it works unseen. Its change in the inner spiritual world is at first invisible. It roots itself in darkness like the plant in the soil; and it is only after a while that its transformation is seen in the outer world of a man's associations and interests.

But whether hidden or manifest, the introduction of leaven into the mass produces a profound disturbance. A contest is at once set up between the active principle of life in the leaven and the inert, sluggish dead mass of the dough. Fermentation ensues, and evidences of the struggle appear in the commotion within the mass, and the bubbles of carbonic gas which seethe and swell through it. And was it not thus with the introduction of Christianity into the dead human world? It was said of its apostles that they turned the world upside down. Everything had to be renewed. It was necessary to upset time-rooted convictions and cherished principles. The selfish ease of spiritual death was disturbed. The life of the gospel in its contact with the evils and idolatries of the world, and the prejudices of men, produced

a perfect ferment of excitement. It stirred up all the torpid aversion to truth and purity into active hostility. It was not without fierce opposition that it raised the death in sin of the old world, into the newness of life in Christ Jesus. And not only in the enemies of religion did it produce this commotion, it excited a similar ferment even in the minds of those who embraced it. Was it not said of the Pentecostal converts that they were like men filled with new wine? Does not St. Paul, speaking of what he saw on a large scale, describe men thrown off their balance and carried away, by feeling their natural faculties transformed and exalted under the divine influence which was pervading the Christian Church! Do we not read in the history of the first Christian centuries of men living in deserts and caves, of men, like Simeon Stylites, standing for years on the top of a pillar of stones, beaten day and night by frost and sun and rain, just because "they were so possessed by the new life, the boundless spiritual power of the gospel, that they did not know how to use it, and were like men intoxicated with this new wine of the spiritual world!" And does not the experience of every believer testify that in him the leaven of spiritual life produces a commotion between the law of his members and the law of his mind; that the new life is not only a new experience, but also a new conflict in his soul, his will being now on the side of conscience, and both being opposed to sin? And this ferment within him, which is often very painful and protracted, is just the characteristic sign to the believer that a good work is

begun in his soul; that there is a divine life struggling with the natural corruption and death of his nature, and transforming it slowly and gradually into its own likeness.

Our Saviour said that the process of leavening would go on until the whole lump should be leavened. Much has been done by the gospel in the world. Most rapid and astonishing was the change which it produced at first over forms of government and manners of life and all human experiences. And that change, with many pauses and interruptions, has gone on upon the whole, ever widening and increasing, during all the intervening Christian centuries, bringing more and more of the world and of human life under its sway. But the process of renovation is very far from being complete. Not to speak of the overwhelmingly corrupt, sluggish masses of heathenism, how much that is inert and dead is there even in Christendom itself; how much spiritual insensibility and torpor is there in our Christian cities, in our Christian congregations, nay even in the very best of our Christian members. Very far indeed is the whole lump from being leavened by the blessed life which Christ brought into our dead world. But let us not despair either for ourselves or for the world. The operations of the Spirit are slow but sure. Scripture and experience alike bid us look forward in confidence to the consummation of the work of the Redeemer, and to the universal diffusion of the gospel throughout all nations. We would magnify the triumphs of the Son of God, and believe in no mere poetical exaggeration,

but in sober earnestness, that the whole creation shall one day be set free from corruption and translated into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; that the leaven of the kingdom of heaven shall indeed so leaven the whole lump of the kingdoms of this world, that they shall all become the kingdom of God and of His Christ.

It is said in the parable that a woman took the leaven and hid it in the meal; and this feature is introduced, not because the exigencies of the parable require it—the baking of the household bread being peculiarly woman's work in the East,—but in order to show forth the agency of the Church in the blessed work of grace. In and through the Church, as the bride, the Lamb's wife, in and through the means of grace which the Church employs, does the work of conversion and sanctification go on in the world. Only as there is life in the Church to secure and preserve the conditions which are necessary in order that this spiritual leaven may work,—its own vital power and proper temperature, as well as the right consistency, heat and permeability of the mass to be leavened; only as its doctrine is pure, its zeal ardent, its love sincere, is it honoured of God when it takes the leaven and hides it in the meal, to produce a transforming and renewing influence. God indeed sometimes gives unexpected success by the power of His Spirit, to show that the efficiency lies with Him; but as a rule the Church can no more expect to be able to feed multitudes with the bread of life, without attending to the well-known conditions under which the heavenly leaven

will work, than we can expect the laws of chemistry to be set aside in the making of our daily bread.

Not representatively or vicariously however does the Church work, but through each of its individual members. If the Church has taken and hidden the principle of spiritual life in us; if we have got saving benefit from our attendance upon the means of grace ourselves, we should remember that in our own salvation we have received a call to seek the salvation of others. We know in the case of the natural leaven that it is not necessary to introduce fresh yeast into every new part of the mass. That which is itself leavened becomes leaven to the rest. It is not the bare yeast-plant that is used in our domestic economy to produce the catalytic changes in the substances into which it is introduced, but the yeast-plant associated with those substances which it has changed into its own nature, to which it has imparted its own properties. Leaven, properly speaking, consists of the living cells of the plant, and the nidus in which they live, the matter upon which they operate. And so the spiritual leaven is not an abstract, impersonal power or doctrine, but a heavenly principle seen in the walk and conversation, hid in the Christian purity and beauty of those whose hearts and lives are savingly influenced by it, warm with their love, and tender and true with their sweet humanity. It was not by the divine Word, but by the Word made flesh, not by the Son of God as He was in the bosom of the Father, but by His incarnation and assumed humanity, that eternal life was introduced into our world. What no authority

or laws, no terrors or promises could do, God has done by presenting Himself to us in the likeness of sinful flesh, that we might be attracted by the sympathies of a co-natural object, and His Spirit might breathe new life into our dead souls through the responsive channels of a common nature. And in like manner it is not by His gospel as a mere draught of excellence, a scheme of benevolence, but by His gospel as exhibited in the living example, embodied in the living form of His followers, that the evil influences of a living and breathing world full of temptations that appeal strongly and warmly to flesh and blood, are counteracted. It is by men, not by spirits, by persons, not by principles that God blesses men. It is by those who have themselves been converted that God strengthens the brethren and saves sinners from the error of their ways. What is wanted is personal work, and personal influence; the touch of a gentle hand, the word of a tender lip, and the look of a pitying eye. And human society has been made a perfect network of sympathies, that the nature of one individual being changed, others may be similarly affected by the change; and this process of grace once started in a particular spot may be transmitted by a self-propagating power, from place to place, we know not how widely.

This blessed leaven is apparently of slight account when judged by man's standard. He who is the leaven in the highest sense had no form or comeliness when He lived on earth and wrought miracles as proofs of His power, and men were offended in Him and despised

Him because of His naturalness and homeliness. And His gospel, even when preached by inspired apostles, was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness. But for all that, the leaven of the heavenly kingdom is the mightiest force in the universe, because it and it alone has eternal life. There is nothing so powerful in nature as life. It is more powerful than the mechanical forces, the forces of heat and light, electricity and gravitation. It can overcome them and use them for its own purposes. A soft living tissue is always stronger than a hard dead one. The feeble, pulpy, coral-polyp, which a child's hand can squelch, can nevertheless build structures which defy the wildest storms of the ocean, and by the sheer force of life resist the mighty mechanical momentum of the raging billows. A growing tree splits the rock or knocks out the solid masonry of the wall by which it is enclosed too tightly. A seed in its germination pushes aside a stone, and a crop of tender mushrooms growing under a pavement have been known to lift it up bodily. And if life even in its feeblest forms can do such wonderful things, what may not be expected from life in its highest form, from the word of God which liveth and endureth for ever, from the working in men's hearts, and in the world of that kingdom of heaven, which amid the moving of all earthly things cannot be moved!

CHAPTER XI.

MANNA AND CORN.

"And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land."—JOSHUA v. 12.

VARIOUS conjectures have been formed regarding the nature of the manna, which every morning whitened like hoar-frost the ground around the encampment of the Israelites in the wilderness. It was indeed a miraculous substance in the sense of its having been provided at the very time when, and in the very circumstances where, it was required. We can see most conspicuously God's hand put forth from behind the veil of His ordinary providence, in the abundance and unfailing regularity of the supply, and in the exceptional feature of its corruption if kept over an ordinary day, and its preservation when reserved for the Sabbath. But we have no reason to believe that it was in itself a miraculous substance, a material previously unknown, created specially for the purpose and coming down straight from heaven. God economises the supernatural element in His working, and makes use of ordinary

means as far as they will go. He did not create abnormal loaves and fishes in the miracle at Capernaum; He only increased the fisherman's scanty meal into a feast for thousands; and the extended loaves and fishes were in all respects the same as those which formed the starting-point of the miracle. The plagues of Egypt, through which the Israelites were delivered from their bondage, were in the line of the natural phenomena of the country. The conversion of the water of the Nile into blood was in accordance with what takes place naturally on rare occasions. During an extraordinarily dry season the river sinks to a low level, the current ceases, and the stagnant water gives birth to a mass of minute plants and animals of a deep crimson colour. Numerous examples occur of lakes and streams being thus so completely filled with an abnormal development of these microscopic objects, that they seemed as if converted into blood. The words of the sacred narrative that the Egyptians "digged round about the river for water to drink," prove that the Nile was at a very low ebb on the occasion. The miracle was therefore only a portentous and well-timed exaggeration for a moral purpose of a natural occurrence. The same may be said regarding the plague of frogs. And we have every reason to believe that God's mode of operation was not different in the desert of Sinai. He who used the ordinary thorny growth of the desert as the medium of His transcendent revelation when He appeared in the burning bush, and converted the simple shepherd's rod in the hand of Moses into a serpent,

and made it the instrument of compassing the deliverance of Israel by signs and wonders, would in all likelihood employ on this occasion a substance indigenous to the desert, as the basis of the great miracle which He wrought for the supply of the daily bread of His people. Such a substance might well have been the white hard exudation that drops from the thorns of the tamarisk shrub, and frequently covers the ground to a considerable extent, which is used for food at the present day by the Arabs, and to which they give the name of manna. We cannot expect to trace an exact correspondence, for some of the qualities and conditions of the manna of Scripture were unmistakably supernatural. It is sufficient if the natural object could serve as a mere fulcrum for the miracle.

But whatever might have been the nature and origin of the mysterious substance which God made use of, it is evident that the manna was intended to serve a wise and gracious purpose in the religious economy of the Israelites. They had followed Moses into the wilderness beyond the reach of ordinary food; where, owing to the nature of the soil and climate, they could neither sow nor reap, and where there was no native provision for their wants. They were in the wilderness, in obedience to God's command, to be trained and disciplined under His own immediate eye, and amid simple and severe conditions favourable for the checking of all that was evil in them and fostering all that was good, in order that they might thus be fit to occupy the Holy Land, and to become God's holy priesthood for the blessing of

all the families of the earth. God therefore engaged to give them what they could not provide for themselves. He who said that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness all other things that we truly need will be given to us, furnished a remarkable illustration of the truth of the promise in the experience of the Israelites. There was no want to those who feared God and did His will; bread was given to them and their water was sure, even if the bread had to come down from heaven and the water had to be produced from the flinty rock by the smiting of the miraculous rod. The whole life of the Israelites in the wilderness was a life of visible dependence upon the providence of God. They were the pilgrim nation, strangers and sojourners with God. They dwelt in His tent; they ate of His salt; and He made Himself directly chargeable for their safety and provision. What He did for other people by round-about secondary means, He did for them directly and immediately. The arm that to other nations was clothed with the ordinary ways and means by which human food is supplied, to them was made bare. They saw behind the scenes, as it were, and God appeared to them visibly as the source of all their blessings. They had renounced the life of sense for the life of faith, and realised that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God.

But this supernatural life was not to last for ever. It was appropriate to the wilderness, God's special dwelling-place, as it were, where there was nothing but God and nature; but it was not suitable to the Promised Land,

where all the conditions of a natural human life existed, and which was the haunt of man as well as the scene of nature's most beneficent operations. It was necessary, when in the desert, where man could not sow, or reap, or procure support by his own efforts, that he should be fed with manna from heaven; but in a region of agriculture, where man's ordinary labour sufficed to supply his ordinary wants, the manna would be altogether superfluous. And accordingly we read that when the Israelites first tasted of the corn of Canaan at Gilgal, the manna which had been their food for so many years previously ceased at once. The natural, which is always, superseded the supernatural, which is only occasional. The miracle must give place to the common processes of life. The training of the Israelites in the wilderness was that of children, in which all things were done for them; but the training of the Promised Land was that of grown-up men who were to keep themselves. As a father feeds his children in his household while they are children, but when they are old enough to leave the parental roof he allows them to take upon themselves the burden of their own support, along with the active duties of life; so He who fed the children of Israel at His own table in the wilderness, when He brought them into the Promised Land left them to provide their own food in the sweat of their face, and to undertake the work of persons who had grown strong, and wise, and capable under His fostering care.

The manna ceasing when the Israelites ate of the corn of Canaan teaches us the lesson that God's help is given,

not to supersede our self-help, but to enable us to help ourselves. He gave manna when the Israelites could not provide their own food, and continued it only till they were able to supply themselves. Thus was it with our Saviour's miracles of healing. He removed the disabilities which prevented the sufferers from earning their own bread and helping themselves in the struggle of life. Those who were lagging behind their fellows in the race because of physical weakness and incapacity, He brought to the front, and restored to them in full vigour the power which would enable them henceforth to hold their own. And there His aid stopped. He did not encumber any one with help; He did not enrich any one or give to any one advantages which others did not possess; He simply gave the subjects of His miraculous cures the power to help themselves. And as in natural so does God act in spiritual things. He helps us to help ourselves. We must work out our own salvation, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. No one can truly know what it is to find his sufficiency in God but he who puts forth all the strength which he himself possesses. It is exactly in proportion as we strive to do all, and strive in vain, that we can have an experimental consciousness of God's almighty aid. And thus the believer feels that God's strength is made perfect in his own weakness.

The difference between manna and corn is most suggestive. Manna was a supernatural product provided directly by Divine power. It came to the Israelites in the wilderness without any toil or trouble

of their own. No tiller of the ground had wrought for it in the sweat of his face, and therefore it was but little esteemed by the Israelites. They soon lost their relish for it; it became tasteless and insipid, and their souls loathed it in the end. It could not possibly satisfy natures so constituted that all their truest joys should come from sorrows, all their highest gains from losses, and all their noblest achievements from the sorest pains and greatest sacrifices. What was easily procured ministered no satisfaction. But corn, on the other hand, implies and involves great and continuous labour. A sacrifice is made, a loss sustained in parting with the seed-corn. There is much sweat of the face in preparing the ground for its reception; faith is exercised in entrusting it to the earth; patience and hope in watching its growth and waiting for its ripening; and toil again is required in reaping, storing, and preparing the harvest for bread. Thus at every step and stage of its growth and preparation for food the corn demands the sweat of the face and the sorrow of the soul, and requires that man should be a fellow-worker with God. And is there not the same wide difference in spiritual things between manna and corn—between what is given to us without any toil or trouble of our own, and what is wrought out for us and in us, as the result of our own toil and, it may be, our own sad experience? No doubt we should prefer manna to corn; we should like to get heavenly blessings straight out of God's hands. But the rule of the Divine kingdom is, "no cross, no crown." Divine blessings are different from fairy favours. The

same law which enjoined that in the sweat of our face we should eat our natural bread, has enjoined that in the sweat of the soul we should eat our spiritual bread. We pray to God for heavenly-mindedness, and God, in answer to our prayer, places us in circumstances in which this grace will be the result of our own experience. He takes away some cherished object or beloved person, or defeats some favourite plan ; and weaned by disappointment, failure, or sorrow from earth, we put our trust in heaven. We cannot get any natural blessing that is worth having except by patient waiting and self-denying effort ; and assuredly we cannot get any spiritual blessings without a similar expenditure of toil and trouble. In no other way would God's spiritual or natural blessings do us good. Only in this Divine way does the procuring of them act as a heavenly discipline, counteracting the evil tendencies of our nature, enabling us to sympathise with the plans and hopes of God, and fitting us for the enjoyment of His everlasting rest.

When the Israelites entered the Holy Land, God gave them at first the corn of their enemies, as He had given them the manna of the wilderness. They spoiled the granaries of the former inhabitants of the land, and subsisted upon the fruit of their labour. They ate corn for which they themselves had not toiled, as they inhabited houses which they themselves had not built. That was necessary—just as it is necessary for the child to be supported at first by its mother's nourishment, and the young plant by the provision stored up in the

seed. But this old corn would last only a little while; it would cease as the manna had ceased. When it was done the Israelites would have to sow and reap their fields in order to get a new supply; they would have to provide for themselves by the toil of their hands. And how significant of the new life which it nourished was the new corn in these circumstances! The Israelites looked forward from the wilderness to the Promised Land as the place of consummation and rest. All conflict, hardship, and toil would there be over for ever; all hopes and desires would be fulfilled; and life would be one long holiday of ease and enjoyment in a land flowing with milk and honey. But they found that their former discipline in the new circumstances was not ended, but only changed in its character; that amid golden cornfields and rich pastures and luxuriant vineyards they would have to practise in even higher degree the virtues which the wilderness-life called forth. The tenure of the Holy Land was a moral one, and only on stern moral conditions could it be owned. They had to enter it as armed soldiers and to conquer every inch of it; and they had to hold it by a repetition of the same toils and self-denials by which they had won it. And how symbolical was the new corn of the land—the bread for which they toiled in the sweat of their face—of this life of self-conquest and devotion which it sustained! It might seem that their life in the wilderness, directly supported by God and under His immediate care, was higher and more heavenly than their life in Canaan, sowing and reaping their fields, and providing for their

wants by their own labour. But it was not so; for the wilderness-life fed by the manna of heaven was only an introduction to, and a preparation for, the higher life of Canaan fed by the corn of earth. And let us remember this solemn fact when we are tempted to think that life spent in directly religious acts in the sanctuary, at the communion-table, in the closet, a holier and more acceptable life to God than the life spent in the place of business and in our homes, in every-day duties and labours. When we look beyond any wilderness of trial and discipline, in which we may be at present toiling and struggling, to any promised land of fulfilled hope and rest in the future, we must bear in mind the fact that we shall there be fed not with manna that costs us nothing, but with corn which requires toil and self-denial. The higher life upon which we enter is only a more serious and painful life than we had known before.

The incident of the manna of the wilderness giving place to the corn of Canaan is in entire harmony with all God's dealings with man. The dispensation that was inaugurated by supernatural manifestations is carried on by common helps, and through the homely experiences of human life. The signs and wonders which opened a new era, or were needed to produce faith in great emergencies, are not perpetuated in ordinary circumstances. The creation commenced with a stupendous miracle, but is preserved by the quiet and uniform methods of nature. The law of Moses, that was given amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, was put in

force throughout the continuous history of Israel by its own solemn sanctions. The Christianity which first took its place in history by the aid of astonishing miracles appealing to the senses, now maintains its position by its own unobtrusive spiritual power. The gifts of Divine inspiration, which were shown objectively to men in the tongues of flame and the mighty rushing wind of Pentecost, were discontinued when the work of the Holy Ghost was carried on spiritually in all places and in all hearts. What is necessary on the stage of initiation disappears from the stage of a fixed institution. The morning glow fades into the common light of day; the heavenly manna of the desert merges into the corn of the cultivated land. Our Saviour said even of Himself, the archetype of the manna, that it was expedient that He should go away from the disciples and from the world. The continued presence of the Saviour visibly upon earth would have been a continual stimulus to the faculty of wonder and awe, and in that respect would have been hurtful to the life of faith. It was necessary therefore that He should be withdrawn from sight, in order that He might be apprehended in His true character by the soul. The supernatural life in the visible presence of Jesus must merge into the natural life of faith and hope amid ordinary circumstances. The restored demoniac would have liked to remain constantly with Jesus, feeding upon the manna of Christ's wonderful words and deeds. But Jesus knew that it would not be good for himself or others that he should thus repose idly upon the bosom

of incarnate love and be sustained in this miraculous way; and therefore sent him away to proclaim to others the wonderful tidings of his restoration, and to find that in doing good to others he was getting good to his own soul; to feed upon the corn sweetened to him by his own toil and trouble. The young believer who has seen with rapturous eye the ascended Saviour on the throne of glory must forego the contemplation of the sublime spectacle, and return to the streets of Jerusalem, and there, among the hard realities of every-day life, work and wait for his Lord. The enthusiastic disciple must go down from the Mount where he has seen his Lord transfigured, and, amid commonplace cares, duties, and trials, strive to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, and to make the world fairer and happier because of his presence and his work in it.

God gives at appropriate times meat to eat which the world knoweth not of—hidden manna, living bread direct from heaven. And when the manna is withdrawn and we are supplied with corn—with human nature's daily food—let us seek to profit by what the manna has done for us and taught us. We have received spiritual food that we may have grace and strength to carry on the common duties of life. We have tasted that the Lord is gracious on the Holy Mount that we may follow hard after Him along the beaten paths of life. The life imparted by Divine power must be sustained by human means. The extraordinary, appropriate to times of religious excitement, must pass into the ordinary experience. What is the birth of a

remarkable occasion must become the habit of an ordinary life. If we only have faith, the corn of every-day duty will minister to us nourishment and growth in grace, as truly as the manna of special communion and fellowship with Jesus at His own table. The corn is as much God's gift as the manna. It is as wonderful and as Divine. It is as truly heavenly food, and it is the food convenient for us. Our bodies, if nourished exclusively by organised materials and chemically prepared food, would waste and starve; and our souls, if fed exclusively upon spiritual things, would become weak and inane. This common every-day life of ours—whose petty details and weary routine we are apt to regard as inconsistent with the high ideals of the soul—is in reality the most sacred and momentous thing in the universe. Let us seek by the grace of God to make it what Jesus made it by His experience on earth. Let us adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, not by fellowship with Himself only in the lonely wilderness, not by communion with His people on sacramental occasions only, but by the spectacle to the world of our industry, our purity, our truth, our honesty, our kindness and charity in all our duties and relationships. And thus we shall continue to eat angels' food; and while labouring for the meat that perisheth, we shall be nourished and strengthened at the same time by the meat that endureth unto everlasting life.

CHAPTER XII.

THE AUTUMN FIRE.

"He will throughly purge His floor."—St. Matthew iii. 12.

A HIDDEN fire burns perpetually upon the hearth of the world. Scientific men call it by the hard name of *eremacausis*, which means quiet or slow burning. We see its effects in the fading of leaves, in the rusting of iron, and in the mantling of the rosy blush upon the cheek of youth. Every tree is a burning bush. In a glory of blossoms vegetation in spring flames from its embers. The lips of the crimson-tipped daisies are touched with a live coal from off the great altar of nature. We speak of the lamp of life as a mere poetical expression, but it is scientifically true; our bodies are burning away as on a funeral pyre, and every breath we exhale is the smoke of the fire that consumes us.

In autumn this great conflagration becomes especially manifest. Then the flame that is slowly and mysteriously consuming every green thing bursts into vivid radiance. Every blade of grass in the fields and every

leaf in the woodlands is cast into the great oven of nature; and the bright colours of their fading are literally the flames of their consuming. The golden harvest-fields are glowing in the heart of the furnace, and the ripe ears of corn are filled with the ashes that have gathered around the smouldering fire of life in order to preserve it; for the starchy products that are deposited in the ears of corn, and which constitute the food of man, are the result of the limitation and quieting of the vital activity of the plant, bringing with it a condition of sleep, from which the brown grains will awaken in the germination of spring, just as the careful housewife covers her fire with its own ashes at night to preserve it for rekindling in the morning. The yearly sacrifice of the first-fruits, golden sheaves of speared barley and wheat, and purple grapes on tinted leaves, which the autumn lays upon the altar of nature as a thank-offering for the fertilising sunshine and the softening rain, is thus salted with fire. And at this sacrifice in the great world-tabernacle the scarlet poppy, the corn blue-bottle, and the purple cockle, that produce such brilliant patches of colour among the sober corn, are like the veil of blue and purple and scarlet which was removed from the Jewish altar when used in the service of the sanctuary; the beautiful thus covering and imparting a mystic value to the useful.

By this autumn fire God every year purges the floor of nature. All effete substances that have served their purpose in the old form are burnt up, and only what has the promise of life and usefulness passes scatheless

through the ordeal. The straw and the chaff are consumed, and the wheat remains. The wheat itself is burnt in the kiln not made with hands, in preparation for its burning in artificial ovens for human food. Without this burning the earth would be cumbered and polluted with its own produce every year, and all fresh growth would be impossible. Everywhere God makes sweet and clean the earth with fire. His flaming besom sweeps from sight, in the most obscure nooks as well as in the open places, the impurities of death and decay, in order to prepare the stage for fresh life and new growth. Over the ravages of the yellow flames of autumn comes the soft, green, healing verdure of spring. Last year's stubble is burnt into the soil, and from the ashes shoots forth a new crop. The red, withered leaves of the woodland are pushed off by the young foliage, into whose brightness their dead substance passes. And every year in spring the earth rises from the great baptismal fire in Edenic freshness and beauty, renewed and transfigured, but ever the same.

This process of purification is helped by living agents as well as by dead forces. In the woods and fields, the moment a plant becomes delicate, owing to uncongenial soil, situation, or other circumstance, or gets smothered by a more vigorous rival, fungi set upon it and burn it by their respiration as effectually as if it were dried and set fire to. The mission of those curious organisms, that shroud decaying vegetation in autumn in a maze and network of white fleecy mould, is to consume

effete substances and render them fit to enter into new forms in the vortex of life. Every blade of grass, and every leaf on a tree has its own fungus, which hastens the process of decomposition, and conserves the valuable materials of life for further use in the great household of nature. Even in the waters this wonderful process of oxidation goes on; and it is remarkable how quickly streams clear themselves from impurities caused by the natural contamination of the soil through which they flow, or introduced into them by sewage or by manufactures. The green, slippery substance which adheres to the stones in their channel, and which is composed of minute thread-like plants, called confervæ and diatoms, performs the same service in the waters which the fungi perform in the fields and woods: it burns up the products of decay that pollute the streams. In mountain districts it lives at the cost of the peaty matter which gives a dark brown tinge to the tarns and burns, and produces by its action the clear pebbly channel and the light silver strand, over which the dimpled wavelets laugh in the sunshine.

As God thus purges His floor in nature, so He does in grace. We have a striking example of the effect of this autumn fire in the removal of the effete things of the Levitical institution. The Mosaic dispensation had become dead ripe. It had served its purpose. Its burdensome ritual had only the shadow of good things to come and could make nothing perfect. It was merely the straw by means of which the true bread of the gospel was to be produced, the foliage through

which the fruit of grace was to be developed; and therefore as the straw withers when the full corn in the ear is formed and the foliage fades when the fruit is matured, so the Mosaic dispensation waxed old and was ready to disappear when the new and better Covenant was established. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to this ripening of the ordinances of the ceremonial law in preparation for Christianity, in the sublime chapter that ends with the significant words, "For our God is a consuming fire." The inspired writer in this chapter speaks of the removal of all the temporary and perishing things of the Old Testament economy—the things that hindered the complete establishment of Christianity in the Jewish world and in the heart of the Jewish Christians. The Hebrew converts to whom the Epistle was written were clinging with almost idolatrous affection to the ceremonies and associations of the law, to the sacrifices and services of the Temple, and by so doing were neutralising the teaching of the gospel, rendering of no effect their faith in Christ, and preventing themselves from going on to perfection in the Christian life. They needed therefore to be reminded—and the object of the whole Epistle, as well as of the particular chapter in question, is so to remind them—that the institutions of the law had no permanent value in themselves, but were only preparatory to Christianity; that they had done the part for which they were designed, and were now to be superseded by the higher and more spiritual beliefs and practices of the gospel. The things which

had no abiding principle, which, like the chaff, were necessary to form the grain, but did not form part of the substance of the grain itself, were to be shaken in order that the things which cannot be shaken might remain; as the withered chaff is blown away from the ripe wheat which is carefully gathered into the barn. Wherefore, says the inspired writer, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, a kingdom of great and eternal gospel realities, the substances of the shadows of the law, let us serve God acceptably, not with the sacrifices and ritual of the law, for these are no longer acceptable, but with spiritual things, with the love of the heart, with the faith of the soul, with the devotion of the life, with reverence and with godly fear. The things which under the law were gain to the Hebrew converts should now be counted loss, yea as dung, and refuse from which all the nourishing substances have been extracted and utilised—for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. In this way then God manifested Himself as a consuming fire. As the autumn fire burns up the ripe growth of the fields, so the fire of God burnt up in the same quiet, gradual manner the temporary and preparatory expedients of the Old Testament economy. He consumed the yellow blade and ear, the straw and chaff, and conserved the full corn in the ear; and laid up for ever the permanent produce of these provisional institutions, as the shew-bread in the holy of holies of the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. As the priest of old consumed on the altar of burnt offering the

sacrifice that was offered, and thus exhaled to heaven its ethereal essence, so God consumed on the altar of Christianity the whole Levitical ritualism, and now He is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Jesus came in the autumn of the world, when all things had grown ripe and old, and all growth had ceased. He came to gather in the harvest of all previous dispensations, the fruits of seeds that had been sown, and had been growing and ripening during all the former ages. He came to cast fire upon the earth, to burn up the chaff of withered and effete institutions. His was a fiery baptism which thoroughly purged His floor—which consumed the stubble and the withered herbage and foliage of the old growth that had served its purpose in the religious culture of a former age, and prepared them for being worked up into the fresh living verdure and new developments of the spring-time of grace. The baptism of John was a process of purification; but it was only a baptism of water. Water can only remove superficial impurities; it cannot take away what is ingrained; it can cleanse surface and accidental or temporary stains, but it cannot change the nature of anything. And so the baptism of John could produce ceremonial purity, but it could not cleanse the sinful heart, or transform the erring and polluted mind. It could remove outward abuses and rectify vicious habits, and produce a reformation of conduct; it could wash away, so to speak, those apparent evils which clog up the pores of the spirit and prevent the light and air of heaven from entering in, just as the

washing of water cleanses the pores of the skin, and allows the genial influences of nature to act upon our internal economy. It prepared the way of Christ by removing those evils, and reforming those abuses in the Church and world which had grown up under ages of Pharisaic righteousness and mere formal mechanical goodness; but it could communicate no vital influence; it could give no renewing power. The baptism of Jesus, on the other hand, was a baptism of fire, and fire penetrates every substance submitted to its action, and changes it into its own nature. It transforms the black coal into vivid brightness; it fuses the coarse ore into the brilliant metal. The fire of life in our bodies consumes their waste and stimulates the vital powers. The fire of life in nature burns up all its decay and prepares it for new growth. And so in the fulness of time Jesus passed like an autumn fire over all the dead products of human attainment, thoroughly purging His floor. He caused, by the same fire of grace, to grow in spring freshness and beauty that fruit which is unto holiness, and whose end is everlasting life.

But not once only in the end of the world did Jesus come to thoroughly purge His floor with this sacred fire. In nature there is not only one season in which the sere, dry herbage of the fields and the foliage of the woods glow in the great autumnal flame, but the fire of decay also flickers even among new, fresh growths all the year round. There is an autumn in every spring and summer. The candle burns at both ends. The plant that bears upon the top of the stem

a brilliant flower has at the foot of it withered cotyledon leaves as scarlet or yellow as the petals themselves. The flame that glows at one end as a beautiful, fragrant blossom, at the other burns as a sere and yellow leaf. Among the evergreen foliage of the pine or the laurel are brown, faded leaves that drop off without being noticed. Growth and decay keep pace with each other; and the fire that here bursts into green, luxuriant life, there smoulders in the dying embers of the closing year. So Jesus not only came during the great autumn of the world's history to burn up all the old, effete things, and to make all things new, but He is coming continually to purge His floor, and His fire of purification is unquenchable. That which hath no promise of life in it, no promise of blessing, however fair and specious its outward appearance may be, He burns like chaff. He destroys everything that has only a partial or transient purpose to serve, when it has done its work. He shakes all temporary things and removes them, that all eternal things which cannot be shaken may remain unhindered and undimmed. And in each of these partial and temporary consumings He anticipates and foreshadows what He will do in the great and final judgment, when everything that is purely subordinate and distinctive in religion, everything that is extraneous to the spiritual nature, however necessary to educate it, everything that bears the stamp of man's weakness, ignorance, and sinfulness, will disappear; and out of the wrecks of the world and of the Church, only a living faith in the atoning Saviour, the hope that

maketh not ashamed, and the charity which is the bond of perfectness, will remain. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three." "If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest; it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

In each human heart this sacred autumn fire of purification is burning as a vestal flame. To each human being the apostolic precept is uttered, "Quench not the Spirit;" put not out the heavenly fire, which God has kindled, by sensual pleasures, by love of the world, or by careless neglect; for this vital heat of life once extinguished, spiritual death is sure to follow. But if suffered to exert its full influence, if fanned and cherished, it cannot in any case be powerless for good. It begins its blessed work like the falling of a spark upon inflammable matter, which gains strength in proportion to the degree of faith and love that are exercised, until at last it bursts into a flame of holiness, transforming and renewing the whole man. And as by the hidden fire of physical life shut up in our bodies, these bodies are purified from the waste caused by their own exercise, and are able to transmute the fruits of the earth into parts of their own vital substance; so by the fire of the Spirit in our hearts, these hearts are purified from all their stains and secret sins, and can assimilate and derive the materials of growth in grace from all the experiences of life. What a wonderful transformation took place in the apostles when

the tongues of fire at Pentecost sat upon them! The change was so manifest, so all-pervading, that it could not be overlooked or misunderstood. The apostles were no more the obtuse, selfish, cowardly men that the disciples had been; but with pure hearts and unselfish zeal and uncompromising boldness they proclaimed the truth, and were ready to be offered up on the altar of their devotion. And such is the effect of the Spirit's manifestation now. He comes as a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning, to separate the chaff from the wheat and the vile from the pure, and to make men new creatures in Christ Jesus.

In each human life the heavenly fire of discipline burns. God suffers no one to escape this ordeal. No Divine change can be wrought even in the best of His people except by passing through the fire of trial appointed by God's providence. And just as each plant, when dead and withered, has its own fungus, which consumes it and thus helps to purify the earth from the encumbrance, so each transgression has its own special punishment connected with it, the intention of which is to destroy it and turn the transgressor into the path of life. Such a process is indeed not joyous, but grievous. It burns up and destroys much to which the heart fondly clings, much which in the eyes of the natural man is precious. It is hard to part with cherished affections and abandon old habits; but the issue is glorious.

Blessed is the life that is thus purified by the autumn fire of God's chastisements; for as in Nature the fairest

and most fertile regions are those which have been subjected to volcanic fires, so green pastures of grace will spring up where sinful desires and unhallowed feelings have burnt down to their own gray ashes. Nor is the autumn of the soul less beautiful than the autumn of Nature, amid all its sadness. It has in it as much of life as of death, of renewal as of destruction. It is as gorgeous in its adieus as spring in its greetings. The fire that gives the hectic hue to the withered leaf imparts the glowing scarlet to the late autumn blossom. While the old things of the natural life are burnt away in that pure oxidizing process of grace which can abide no waste or decay, the new things of the spiritual life are kindled into more radiant loveliness. And if the present autumnal fire of God's dealings with us has thoroughly purged our floor, we need not fear any future fire of judgment. We are like the Indian who burns a space of ground around him to save him from the great prairie conflagration. All that can be consumed has already been consumed, and while the elements melt with fervent heat, and the new heavens and the new earth are being prepared through the final baptism of fire, we shall not be afraid; for we shall be in harmony with the order and beauty of all the worlds. We shall pass unscathed through the devouring fire. Fire cannot burn or destroy fire. A life that is as ethereal and pure as fire itself can remain unhurt in the midst of it. If God be a consuming fire, then we can dwell with Him, even amid the everlasting burnings.

If we are pained and suffer loss by the autumn fire now, it is ever a comforting thought that it belongs to the dispensation of Sinai—of the mount that might be touched and that burned as with fire, and is but the partial and preparatory revelation of God. Fire is caused by the world's disharmony, and will cease for ever when there is nothing to purify and nothing to remove. And the only memory of it that shall remain to us in the final and crowning dispensation, in which God will be our everlasting light and our God our glory, will be the seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne. These will complete the baptism of fire begun on earth, replenish all minds with heavenly light, inspire all hearts with holy love, and touch all lips with seraphic fire. And they will shed the opalescent gleams of their unquenchable, unconsuming flame on the sea of glass mingled with fire—God's floor which has been thoroughly purged for the tread of feet that Jesus' hands have washed, and for the sweep of robes that His blood has made white.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FRUIT-TREE AND THE CHAFF.

"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither. The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."—PSALM I. 3, 4.

THE first Psalm forms a most appropriate introduction to the whole Psalter. It strikes the key-note of those statutes of God which are the song of His people in the house of their pilgrimage. Like an illuminated initial letter, it presents a graphic picture of the contrast between the blessedness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked, under the emblem, on the one hand, of a fruit-tree flourishing beside a river and on the other, of a handful of chaff winnowed by the wind. It brings back, in the one case, the Edenic condition of our unfallen first parents dwelling safely and happily beside the tree of life and the four rivers that watered the primeval paradise; and in the other, it shows us how the doom of banishment into the wilderness—separation from the life and blessedness of

God, as the withered chaff is separated from the beautiful fruitful plant, and blown away by the desert-breeze—the doom inflicted upon Adam and Eve after they fell, is repeated in the history of every soul that sinneth wilfully and persistently against its better knowledge. We cannot help thinking that there was a conscious reference to the imagery of the first Psalm in the words with which John the Baptist began his preaching of repentance: "He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire;" and also in the saying with which our Lord Himself commenced His public ministry: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

Let us look briefly at the significance of the picture which the Psalmist paints for us—the striking analogies of the fruit-tree and the chaff.

I. A fruit-tree planted on the banks of a river suggests to us, first, *stability*. The tree is firmly rooted in the soil, so that it can resist the storm. It is the most steadfast and enduring of all living things. There are trees still standing that have lived through the whole history of England, and, in what remains of them, are as fresh and green as in their prime, showing no signs of old age or decay. Etymologically, the word tree is cognate with the Anglo-Saxon word *treowan*, to trust, to prove, which still survives in our word *trow*. Truth and trust are sister terms; these qualities being literally

trees of the mind, firmly rooted in the soil of mental conviction. The Hebrew word for tree expresses the same attribute of strength and endurance. In this respect a tree is beautifully symbolical of the stability of the righteous. They are rooted in the divine love. They have a strength and unity of character which enables them to overcome the common temptations of daily life as well as the great storms of persecution and trial. Their belief has passed beyond the reach of perturbation or shock. They have so grasped the truth of the glorious grace and faithfulness of the God of heaven, that it has rooted them into a kindred constancy. Their life is redeemed from its vanity and perishableness by being united to Him who only hath life.

But the idea of the fruit-tree planted by a river implies *access to a perennial source of nourishment and refreshment.* This is a peculiarly oriental image. A river in the arid East is an artery of life, and only on its banks do trees cluster and grasses grow. A tree, therefore, with its head in the torrid sunshine, and its feet laved by a perpetual stream that has its source far up a snowy mountain, is one of the most beautiful images of a righteous man, who flourishes in the withering atmosphere of the world, and endures the fiery trials of life, just because all his well-springs are in God, and the sources of his human steadfastness and hope are high up in heaven. He is independent of the precarious supplies of the world: he has meat to eat which the world knoweth not of. And as the

tree that has its roots in the perennial stream can make a friend of the scorching sun that would otherwise destroy it, and weave its burning rays into luxuriant foliage and juicy fruit, so the righteous—who are continually refreshed and quickened by the unseen river of life that flows from the Great White Throne—can defy the drought of evil circumstances, and turn all hostile things to blessed uses.

It is said by the Psalmist of the tree planted by the rivers, that *it yields its fruit in its season.* Fruit is that part of the tree which belongs not to the individual, but to the race. In the fruit the tree sacrifices its own individual life for the sake of the life that is to spring from it; converts branch and foliage, that would have remained and ministered to its own beauty and luxuriance, into blossom and fruit that fall off, and minister to the continuance of the species and the good of other creatures. The fruit in no case benefits the tree itself, but, on the contrary, burdens and exhausts it, as is clearly proved by the shorter life of fruit-trees as compared with other trees, and by the fact that the more fruit a tree produces, the more speedily does its vitality decline. In this respect, then, the fruit which the righteous produce may be said to symbolise their self-denying labours for others. The distinguishing peculiarity of the righteous is self-sacrifice. They have truly learned that first lesson of the Christian life. They have become partakers not of a selfish human, but of an unselfish divine, nature; and like Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give

His life a ransom for many, they go about continually doing good. They form, wherever they are, a centre of usefulness, round which a circle of blessed sympathies and ministries gathers. They do the kind or noble deed promptly—exactly when it is needed—without delay or undue haste—like a tree that keeps time with the motion of the spheres, and brings forth its fruit in its season—not too soon, lest the frost should blight it—not too late for the sun to ripen it. Their fruit is a living self-sacrifice for others, the spontaneous, natural outcome of a renewed and loving nature, not a dead, perfunctory obedience to an outward law; and out of the loss and pain which the sacrifice involves, comes the purest and deepest joy known to a human spirit; just as the fruit that involves the self-sacrifice of the plant is the part that has the richest fragrance and flavour and the highest beauty.

It is further said of the fruit-tree by the rivers that *its leaf also shall not wither*. This is a remarkable feature. It is the old idea of the bush burning, but not consumed. In nature, it is only through the fading of the leaf that the fruit ripens. It is the law of life that one part of the organism must die in order that another part may grow and perfect itself. The yellowing autumnal foliage accompanies the development of the fruit; and the fading of the leaf and the maturing of the fruit keep pace with each other. But it is not so with the tree which represents the righteous. It is an evergreen, in which, while the leaves do fade and fall away, according to the universal law of life, they do so

without being marked; in which there is no long interval of winter desolation, but a constant succession of foliage, keeping the tree always fresh and green. The leaf of the tree belongs to the tree itself. It is the part that is peculiar to its individual life. By it the tree breathes and forms its wood from air and sunshine. It is its strength, it is *itself;* for the whole tree is simply a modification and development of the leaf, as it is most certainly the creation of the leaf. The leaf, therefore, represents the righteous man's own life. Not only does he do good to others by self-sacrificing labours, and thus keep up the general blessedness of the world, but he gets good to himself. His own life is blessed. Nothing can keep the heart fresh and young and joyful amid the cares and changes of life like the godliness which is to a man's nature what sunlight is to a plant. All true goodness comes from godliness. There may be dry, dim imitations of goodness without godliness among men who have naturally amiable dispositions, just as a plant deprived of light, if it has only access to moisture, will produce a pale blanched ghost of stem and foliage. But it needs the sunlight of God's grace to impart living greenness and fadeless vigour. And in proportion as the life of God quickens and inspires us,—in proportion as we live in the sunshine of His presence—so does our life resist the forces of the world that tend to age and blight it, and rise to godlike beauty and proportion. While it expends its vital powers in bringing forth the fruits of self-sacrificing love for others, it keeps its own leaf green with all the spring freshness of

thought and feeling, by renewed supplies from the fulness of Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

2. But let us now turn to the analogy of the *chaff* as representing the ungodly. This image is a complete contrast to the other. Chaff is the husk or light dry covering of the seed of corn in the ear. When the corn is threshed in the open Eastern threshing-floor, it is tossed up by a shovel or fan, when the pure grain falls to the ground in a heap, and the light chaff is blown away by the wind. Chaff is a dead leaf that was once green and flourishing, full of sap and life. It once performed an important part in the growth of the plant. It formed a protection to the grain during its immature state; and through its functions the seed expanded and ripened. It was a miracle of beauty and design admirably adapted for its purpose; it once adorned and helped the plant upon which it grew. But now it is effete, and has no vital connection with the plant. Its work is over, and it hangs mechanically as a deformity to the ear of corn, to be swept off as utterly useless by the fan of the farmer, and added to the rubbish-heap. And how expressive a symbol is it in this respect of the ungodly! Equally worthless does a human being become who has lost his true life and aim by ungodliness. He was fearfully and wonderfully made. He had vast powers and capacities; a nature made in the image of God, which nothing but God himself could satisfy. He began life fair and bright. At one time he was useful and happy. In his young innocent days he was loving and beloved. There was a deep harmony

between himself and the beings and things around him. But as he grew older, he became alienated from God in heart and conduct. Consequently a process of corruption of sense and soul commenced in him. Sin robbed life of its promise and beauty, and made it a dreary waste; dried up all the freshness and fairness of his being. And now, useless to God and man, out of harmony with the living world, grown old and dull of heart, without a sense to enjoy anything that God has given, he sits down amid the wreck of a dishonoured and desecrated nature to die. He is winnowed out of the society of the true Israel, with whom he has no part or lot, by the fan of God's judgment.

And this fact that the chaff is driven to and fro by the wind, to which the Psalmist alludes, suggests a very solemn thought. Losing its life, the chaff loses its connection with the plant that produced it. Falling from the higher powers of the organic world, it comes under the lower powers of the inorganic. Ceasing to perform the purpose of life, it becomes a waif swept out by the dead wind. And so it is with the ungodly man. It is godliness, godlikeness, the divine image in which man was created, that separates him as a creature from the mass of creation. It is this attribute in him which makes him a person, an individual; which resists the tendency towards the disintegration, towards the corruption that is in the world through lust. But losing this quality, walking according to the course of this world, he becomes a mere part of the creation instead of a person having personal relations with the personal God. Ceasing to obey the

laws of his spiritual life, he comes under the power of material laws which drag him down to the dishonouring dust. The ungodly have no individuality; they live and move and act and are dealt with in the mass. They are like a handful of chaff, a confused, indistinguishable heap, which the unconscious wind drives to and fro. They are led captive by the devil at his will.

Nothing is more remarkable than the fact so often pointed out that the criminal classes act according to set forms, and yield to temptation in a recognised way. Certain kinds of wrong-doing bear a fixed ratio to certain determinable exigencies; they prevail in particular states of society; and there are moral epidemics of vice and crime, just as there are physical epidemics of bodily disease; the evil spreading by sympathy and example in the one case, as it spreads by infection or contagion in the other. In a series of years there is a well-known average of crimes. We can prognosticate in a given community how many paupers, suicides, and criminals there will be; and not only the number of murders, but even the weapons used in their commission, can be ascertained in advance. We can calculate the evil passions of men as we can calculate the coming of a storm or an eclipse. And thus the awful lesson is read to us, that human beings, when they have sold themselves to sin, and in consequence lose that originality, that distinct personal life, that masterly faculty which the Spirit of God produces and develops, are controlled, notwithstanding their sudden waywardness and wild, capricious inconsistencies, by laws which

apply to *mere things* in which there is no principle of life to resist and dominate circumstances. They pass beyond the sphere of the grace of God—whose operation brings out more and more into relief against the things and the circumstances of the world the personality of the believer—into the passive realms of matter; just as the chaff, losing its organic life and its hold of the organism that produced and nourished it, comes under the sway of the dead elements of the physical world.

What a contrast, then, between the living tree and the dead chaff! The living tree, because of its vitality, takes hold of the soil, and lays all nature under contribution for its sustenance; makes all things willing ministers to it; draws its life and support from earth and sky, from sunshine and river; and organises all the contributions it receives into grateful sweetness of fruit and unfailing beauty of foliage. But the dry chaff, on the other hand, because of its loss of life, loses its hold of the plant and of the earth that nourished it; is blown about by the idle wind as a dead thing that has no longer a part to play in the living world; and descends rapidly to join the inert kingdom of darkness and chaos. All things are hostile to it. The same air and sunshine which are productive of health, beauty, and fruitfulness to the living tree, are the sources of more rapid decay in the dead chaff. Behold in the mirror of these two common metaphors the likeness of the two moral classes of mankind; and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not!

CHAPTER XIV.

AN APPLE.

"Comfort me with apples."—SONG OF SOLOMON ii. 5.

THE term *apple* is a conventional one. By the ancients it was applied indiscriminately to almost every round fleshy fruit. Many fruits are still popularly known as apples, although they are widely different from the produce of the orchard, such as thorn-apple, pine-apple, custard-apple, love-apple. We require to take into account this extended application of the term, in order to understand the metaphorical allusions to the apple in ancient poetry, classical and oriental. And only in this sense can we see any foundation for the popular belief which has existed from a very early period —that the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden was an apple; the tradition having no sanction, directly or by implication, from Scripture. For the same reason the fruit which Paris gave to Venus, provoking the wrath of the other slighted goddesses and occasioning the disastrous Trojan war, was called a golden apple.

Such associations have given the fruit a bad reputation, which has been still further increased by the fables of the apples of discord and the apples of Sodom—fair on the outside, but within full of bitter ashes.

The word *apple* occurs several times in the Bible, but there is abundant reason to believe that it is in almost every case a mistranslation of a word which should have been rendered citron, orange, or quince. The East is not the true home of the apple. It is essentially a Western fruit, the product of the cooler air and moister skies of the north temperate zone. The wild crab-apple, from which all the cultivated varieties have sprung, is a native of most of the countries of Europe; and the development of the fruit has engaged the attention of their inhabitants as far back as we can trace. The tree does not grow wild in the East as it does in our hedges and woodlands, and the ancient Jews were altogether ignorant of apples such as we know them. Their apples were the golden globes of the orange, which nowhere taste so deliciously as when gathered fresh from the groves of the Holy Land. In the north of Palestine, where the scenery and climate approximate somewhat to those of Britain, a few orchards and isolated apple-trees are cultivated, the progenitors of which were probably introduced by the monks of Europe during the time of the crusades. Farther east, in warmer countries, the tree degenerates and changes its peculiar character and habit of growth entirely, becoming useless both as a fruit and timber tree. To the Romans who possessed, as Pliny tells us, at least twenty-two different kinds that were highly

esteemed, we probably owe the introduction of many of our cultivated varieties of apples. The list was greatly extended after the Norman Conquest, putting us in possession of the better sorts grown on the Continent. It is strange to associate the diffusion of this fruit, whose cultivation is one of the most characteristic arts of peace, with the ravages of conquering armies; and yet, paradoxical as it appears, the knowledge and propagation of many of our most useful fruits may be traced to this unlikely source. But what war introduced, religion developed; for it was chiefly the monks who, as the great horticulturists of the Dark Ages, brought to perfection in our land the fruit-trees imported from other countries. And many of our favourite varieties of apple —such as the Arbroath Oslin, the Keswick Codling, the Norfolk Biffin, and the Fair Maid of Kent—that have held their own during all these centuries, had their first home in the quiet seclusion of the monastery garden, situated in some romantic spot which human skill and toil had reclaimed from the wilderness and converted into a second Eden.

The apple is appropriately associated by popular tradition with the paradisaical condition of man, for it belongs to an order of plants that was introduced into the world about the human period. The previous geological ages had produced no flowers or fruits. Plants of inferior type, but of vaster size and more rapid growth than those of the present day, absorbed the foul vapour that loaded the primeval atmosphere, and purified it for the more refined breathing of higher orders, and

allowed the sunlight to shine upon them and develop in them hues kindred to its own. Nature in former epochs had run into rank, luxuriant foliage, but she blossomed and fruited when man came upon the scene. According to that infinitely wise plan which regulated the succession of plants and animals upon the earth, and established a perfect harmony between their nature and the characteristics of the different epochs in which they were introduced, man did not appear until a suitable flora had been prepared to furnish him with needful occupation as shepherd, farmer, and gardener. Nor did this flora appear until a being had been formed who could appreciate and utilise it fully. And this correspondence between the late bestowal of flowers and fruits, and man's recent arrival upon the scene, extended to more than mere physical adaptation. There is a profound relation between the efflorescence of the earth and that of the human soul. The fullest significance of flowers and fruits can only be seen in the life of man, for the illustration of which they furnish innumerable expressive images and analogies.

The apple belongs not only to the latest, but also to the highest order of plants. This order is the *Rosaceæ*, which for beauty of colour, grace of form, perfection of structure, and great and manifold utility, takes precedence of all others. The queen-like rose is the type of all rosaceous plants. They graduate in various degrees of family likeness around it. The order comprehends an immense number of genera and species, which yields some of the most highly prized fruits, such

as the peach, the cherry, the plum, the pear, the strawberry, the almond. It is a remarkable circumstance that while the blossoms of this order are of various shades of yellow, white, and red, blue is altogether unknown. This colour, so predominant in bell-shaped blossoms, has no place in one of the largest families of plants. Another peculiarity of rosaceous plants is, that all their parts, as a rule, are arranged according to the number five. The blossoms have five petals, the calyx five sepals, and there is a numerical correspondence in the foliage and fruit. Five seems to be the typical number of the highest order of vegetation. Indeed, all flowering plants may be arranged, so far as their numerical significance is concerned, into two great classes—plants whose parts are arranged in fives and multiples of five, and plants whose parts are arranged in threes and multiples of three. The former comprises the *Rosaceæ*, and the latter the *Liliaceæ;* so that the rose and the lily may be said to divide between them the sovereignty of the vegetable kingdom. I may add under this head, that man sums up in himself the numerical significance both of the rose and the lily: for while five is the typical number of his fingers and toes, three is the typical number of the joints of his digits. In the highest type of the human countenance the prevailing colours of the rose and lily are combined. The bride in the Song of Solomon says of Him who is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, "My beloved is white and ruddy." And such correspondences as these in physical things between the highest types of flowers and man,

whose glory is as the flower of the field, fit them in a most interesting manner, for being the interpreters of his spiritual things, the symbols of "all passionate temptation and pure delight, from the coveting of Eve to the crowning of the Madonna."

Looking at an apple from a morphological point of view, we find that it is an arrested branch. Instead of going on to develop more wood and foliage, a branch terminates in an apple; and in this apple the sap and substance that would have prolonged the branch are concentrated, and hence its enlarged size and capability of expansion. The limits of the blossom are pretty well defined; it seldom exceeds certain fixed dimensions. But the fruit is indefinite, and can be grown to almost any size, as is proved by the enormous pears and apples cultivated in France and California. The principle upon which the formation of an apple depends may be thus explained. A bud, which under the ordinary laws of vegetation would have elongated into a leafy branch, remains in a special case shortened, and develops, according to some regular law, blossom and fruit instead. Its further growth is thus stayed; its life terminates with the ripe apple that drops off to the ground; whereas another bud that does not produce a flower or fruit grows into a branch, clothes itself with foliage, and lives for years, developing wood and leaves like the rest of the tree. That this is the true secret of the formation of an apple is proved by abnormalities of growth which occasionally occur. Unripe apples and pears are not unfrequently found with a twig growing

out of the top of them covered with green leaves; the branch in such cases, instead of being arrested and terminated by the fruit, going on and passing through it, developing an active vegetative growth. And what thus takes place occasionally in an abnormal manner in the apple and pear occurs always naturally in some fruits, such as the pine-apple, where the stem passes through the fruit, and produces above it a tuft of prickly leaves. The same onward mode of growth is characteristic of several of the myrtle-like plants of Australia, in which a leafy shoot grows from the apex of the fruit, promising and beginning the whole history over again, the true Phœnix of creation. What produces the arrestment of the branch and the consequent formation of the apple is poverty of condition, or any shock or circumstance which places the life of the plant in danger. Nature in such a case hastens to make provision for the continuance of the type by developing blossom and fruit, the organs of propagation; whereas very wet or very warm springs, or very rich soil being favourable to the life of the plant, have a tendency to foster the wood and foliage, and make it barren and unfruitful. As a remarkable example of the abnormalities that occasionally occur showing the true genesis of flowers and fruits, it may be mentioned that Mr. Thomas Meehan exhibited at a scientific meeting not long ago, an apple produced by a tree in Pennsylvania which never bore any flowers in the popular acceptation, but always yielded an abundance of fruit. The apples were made up of a series of whorls of leaves,

comprising five each, and were chiefly remarkable in having no cores.

Looking upon an apple thus as an arrested branch, the branch giving up its own individual life in order that the species may be perpetuated by means of blossom, and fruit, and seed, we behold in it, as in a glass, a very striking natural example of the law of self-sacrifice; that law which pervades all nature, and upon which the welfare and stability of nature depend. And it is a most interesting circumstance, as observed in a previous paper, that it is in this self-sacrifice of the plant that all its beauty comes out and culminates. The blossom and fruit in which it gives its own life for another life that is to spring from it are the loveliest of all its parts. God crowns this self-denial and blessing of others with all the glory of colour, and grace of form, and sweetness of perfume, and richness of flavour. Nor is the reward even thus exhausted. The bud that grows into a leafy branch and remains on the tree has but a limited range of development—"it abideth alone"—it continues simply a branch—a part of the parent tree; but the bud that terminates in a fruit that drops off the tree grows, in the seed which it produces, into several independent trees, bringing forth much fruit, and reading to us the great moral lesson that he that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal.

An apple is the most perfect realisation of a fruit. When the fruit is formed, the blossom and all its outer envelopes usually fall off the stem, and only the central

organ is taken up into the structure of the fruit. The fruit in most cases is only an enlargement of the ovary or lower part of the pistil; but in the case of the apple several parts of the flower are concerned in the fruit. It consists of an enlargement of the innermost and outermost parts of the blossom of the ovary and the calyx combined. The cherry and the orange are developed from the ovary only; but the apple retains the calyx, or the external envelope of the flower, which in most fruits drops off altogether, or remains as a withered husk below the fruit, and incorporates it into its own structure. In fact, the tube of the calyx is united to the pistil, and therefore it shares in the expansion of the ovary at the foot of the pistil; so that an apple may truly be considered as an excessive enlargement and alteration in texture of the calyx-tube. The eye of the apple, or the little hollow at the top, consists of the withered segments of the persistent calyx, and sometimes also of a few brown dried-up stamens. It is because the calyx enters into the composition of the apple that the fruit possesses such unwonted powers of endurance, the calyx being the toughest of the floral parts. Apples, if properly taken care of, can continue fresh and good almost all the year round—from the old harvest to the new; whereas fruit formed by the ovaries alone, such as the orange, the cherry, the plum, and the grape, partake of the tender fugacious nature of the pistil, are liable to suffer from unfavourable weather, and yield freely to decay. The seeds of the apple are contained in five cavities, called carpels,

having a tough parchment-like lining called the core formed by the cohesion of several pistils. In all these respects an apple is the true ideal of a fruit. It conserves the greater part of the previous structures, embracing in its formation all the parts of the flower with the exception of the petals. It embodies a larger amount of wholesome and palatable nourishment in its fleshy substance than most other fruits, and is hardier in its nature, remains longer in season, and retains its pleasant flavour to the last.

The flesh of the apple, it may be remarked, has no purpose to serve in the economy of the plant itself. It does not supply, as many are apt to suppose, the first food for the germinating plants of its seeds; for these seeds contain the nourishment of their embryos within themselves, according to the beautiful and tender law of nature that always links the mother's bosom with every young life. The flesh of the fruit has no relation to the embryo; it is merely an excretion of the plant, produced in large measure by cultivation. In the natural state it is so little developed that the wild fruit is almost worthless for food. It is the aim of the gardener to increase this outcast superfluous substance; and it is marvellous what triumphs in this direction he achieves. And surely this capability of developing flesh which certain fruits possess in relation to the wants of man is one of the most interesting subjects of thought. In this respect man is a fellow-worker with God, in dressing and keeping the great garden of nature so that there shall be trees in it good for food

and pleasant to the taste. The nature bound fast in fate has been made fluent by the freedom of the human will; and all the hints and outlines suggested by her roots, and fruits, and flowers are worked out and filled in by man in the exercise of this wondrous divine gift. Passing strange it is that through this same freedom of will, he should, in the higher moral region, instead of being a fellow-worker with God, be less true to his proper end and destiny than the beasts that perish to their several instincts.

Why is an apple round? The circular shape is that in which forces and substances are most perfectly balanced—in which there is the greatest economy of material, and the greatest resistance to external circumstances. It is the most stable of all forms, and therefore, characteristic of bodies in repose. We find it in all those parts of a plant that have entered upon the stage of rest—in the tuber or bulb, in the bud, in the leaf, in the flower, in the fruit and in the seed. The linear form, on the other hand, belongs to objects in motion—that are active and advancing onward. It is characteristic of the growing parts of a plant, as the stem, the branches, the roots. A plant thus grows from linear to globular forms. The round seed when germinating sends up a linear stem; this stem reaches a knot of rest, and then puts out on either side round leaves; from this stage it produces another length of linear stem, and then enters at another knot a stage of rest, developing on either side round leaves. And thus the plant grows by alternate motion and rest

in linear stem and branch, and in round foliage, until it reaches the blossom, when it enters upon stages of rest more or less prolonged, which culminate in the globular fruit. The round seed is the last stage of rest. In it the plant gathers all its forces and rests indefinitely, so long as it is kept out of the ground. It is the little ark containing the promise of the summer life, floating over the drowned winter world. The form of the apple is thus that which everything reaches when life has done its work and returned to repose. All life seeks to round itself to perfection and rest. Our own conical heart in its ceaseless beating is continually aiming at the completion of its circular form, and with this the attainment of perfect repose; and we are thus solemnly reminded that death is not merely the end, but the very aim of organic life—the result of the full satisfaction of the law of symmetry. It is because this law is thwarted, and the matter that would have completed the spherical form of the heart is carried away and diffused over the body for its nourishment and growth by the circulation of the blood, that our life is maintained and our heart made to be its grand minister. Wherever we turn we behold the same contest between the law of symmetry, which seeks to round off and reduce everything to perfect repose, and the law which seeks by incessant motion to keep everything in life—between the linear and the circular. The whole heavens and the whole earth are continually aiming at the spherical form; and they fail to reach or retain it because of their want of repose, insisting upon a shortcoming or departure from the

spherical. Thus the apple becomes to us a very significant object, when we see in its round form a striking illustration of the same law that is shaping the earth around us, and the heavens above us, and the heart within us. It is in little all the sphere; a miniature organic orb, in which the cycle of the life of the tree has completed itself, and is at rest. Most wonderful is it to think of this little orb of the seasons, that is so still and quiet, that shows no sign that it has any life within it, yet containing in its core, carefully guarded from outward injury, and richly provided with all the materials of growth and nourishment, the small round seeds, in which the life of the tree has retired a while in order to gather itself up for a new effort, has paused for a little in a simulated death, that it may start forth in a new field, and with a new realisation of its ideal—to repeat the endless round of its existence.

The skin or rind which hems in the apple, and by limiting completes and individualises it, is also a most significant feature. It varies in thickness, smoothness, quality of texture, and colour in different varieties of apple; but in all it may be said to pass through the different stages of leaf and flower like the plant that bears it. In the immature or green state it may be regarded as the equivalent of the foliage which the twig on which it grows would have produced, had it not been arrested and made to produce a fruit instead. Its fleshy part is an extraordinary development of the tube of the calyx, which is a metamorphosed leaf, and the carpels at the core are all modified leaves; so that the

whole apple represents the transformation for reproductive purposes of a series of leaves. It acts in all respects as a leaf. Wonderful is the ministry of the green skin of plants. It changes inorganic into organic matter, and thus furnishes the starting-point of all life. Nowhere else on the face of the earth does this most important process take place. Everything else consumes and destroys; the green skin of plants alone creates and conserves. It is the mediator between the world of death and the world of life. Hence the significance of the green colour which appears so vividly in all young growing plants.

We thus see that this truly vegetable process of creating organic matter is performed only by a very small part of a plant, viz. the cells on the surface, which contain the green matter called chlorophyll, and which are exposed to the action of sunlight. The cells in the internal parts of plants—in the inside of the stem, and in the flesh of the fruit—are perfectly colourless, secluded from light, and do not create, but, on the contrary, feed upon, the organised matter produced by the green cells on the outside. They do not exercise a vegetable, but an animal function. They are like the pale parasitic plants which feed upon the organic compounds elaborated by their hosts, instead of forming materials of growth for themselves directly out of inorganic substances. Thus the green skin of the apple serves all the purposes of a leaf, and performs the great function of the vegetable kingdom in keeping up the balance of organic nature; while the white inside flesh, composed of simple sacs of cellulose,

has no vegetable reactions, but lives parasitically, as it were, upon the green skin, and breathes the air in the true animal sense. But when the apple has grown to its full size, and as it goes on to ripen, its outer surface and its inner substance, its skin and its flesh, become assimilated. The green colour of the skin passes away, and various tints according to the variety of apple, such as yellow, brown, and red, take its place. It loses its vegetable power of creating organic matter with its loss of colour. It absorbs oxygen and exhales carbon; and this oxidation is the cause of the bright colour which it assumes, like the hectic flush on the cheek of the consumptive. The cells of the flesh in the interior at the same time form starch and sugar, which are simply the ashes deposited by the fire of life, gradually limiting, and finally quenching, vital action altogether. When the ripening process is completed, and the connection of the apple with the tree is cut off, certain chemical changes allied to fermentation take place within it. The sugar is decomposed, and alcohol and certain ethers are produced, developing the flavour of the fruit. After a while another process begins: the outside softens and becomes watery; the apple loses flavour and commences to decay; and at last it becomes shrouded in a maze and network of soft dusty fungi, which rot and burn it away by a process of respiration as effectually as if it was dried and set fire to. But the imprisoned seeds which it carefully guarded in its core in the meantime are liberated; and they fall into suitable soil and germinate, and produce, in course of time,

fruit-laden apple-trees; and the whole cycle of interesting phenomena from the seed to the apple, and from the apple to the seed, are gone over again and again in the ceaseless vortex of life.

We thus see that the little globe of the apple is a microcosm, representing within its miniature sphere the changes and processes which go on in the great world. Life and death, growth and decay, fight their battle on its humble stage. Fermentation and putrefaction, the two great processes under whose familiarity are hid some of the greatest wonders of the physical world, take place within it. It exhibits the characteristics of the vegetable, animal, and mineral kingdoms; it creates organic matter, and it consumes it; and in its motion within its little orbit, from its formation on the bough in summer to its fall to the ground in autumn, it illustrates the action of the mighty laws which bind the universe together. Our greatest philosopher, by his sublime theory of gravitation, connected it with the stars of heaven; and to every thoughtful mind it suggests far-reaching ideas which shed light upon the mysteries of our own world. While it hangs upon its stem, it is in some kind of magnetic correspondence with all the powers of nature; it shares the life of the earth and the sky. It is an embodiment of the air and the sunshine and the dew. Reddened by the fire of a July sun and varnished against the rain, it contains all the summer life of the garden within it. But its special charm consists not in its scientific teaching or in its material utilities. Who would care to study

an apple, or any other natural object, were it not for its religious side? The secret wonder in it, which connects the universe with its Creator and Preserver, makes every spot of ground sacred, and the investigation of physical truth itself a virtual seeking after God. Nothing can be simpler and lowlier than such an object-lesson. It is nigh unto us, in our very mouths, familiar to every child, but its simplicity is the mystery of the unsearchable God, the depth of the clear but unfathomable heaven. Autumn is the season of revealing; and the fruit is ripened when the foliage that hid the orchard is stripped off, and all its secrets are opened to the glances of the sun. But no autumn of revelation comes to the tree of knowledge, and we pluck its fruit from the bough in the midst of mysteries that conceal even while they reveal it—that baffle even while they instruct us. But these mysteries are favourable to faith and to a simple child-like trust, leaving what it cannot understand, with a wise contentment, in the infinity of God. Enough for us that while this simple, humble creature gives beauty to the eye, and fragrance to the nostril, and food to the appetite, it furnishes at the same time food for thought and incense for worship, and ministers to the life of our souls, which is our highest life, by speaking of Him who rounds with good the common nature of all life.

CHAPTER XV.

A CORN OF WHEAT.

"And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."—ST. JOHN, xii. 20–25.

THERE were two manifestations of our Lord to the Gentiles in the days of His flesh. One took place at the beginning and the other at the close of His life. The Magi, the wise men of the East, came to the cradle of Jesus; the Greeks, the wise men of the West, came, it may be said, to His cross. The old world of the East, from which have come our race, our myths and nursery tales, with its exhausted history and completed revelation, came to the cradle of the Child of Promise to receive from that wonderful Birth a fresh impulse, a new start in the progress of development,

to share in the new creation of God and rejuvenescence of the world. The new world of the West, with its mobile life, its ever expanding history, its glowing hopes and aspirations, came to the cross of the Redeemer that it might receive the baptism of a deeper earnestness and a higher consecration. In these two Epiphanies we see harmoniously united the two great systems of pagan religion which separately were but a mere fragment of the truth, and contained no hope or promise of blessing for man. The Orientals had the humiliation of the Godhead as dimly shadowed forth in the Avatars of Vishnu and Buddha; the Greeks had the exaltation of manhood as shown in the apotheosis of the heroes of the Pantheon. Thus appropriately the representatives of the wisdom of the East and the West came respectively to the birth and death of Him who, though He was the equal and the fellow of God, yet humbled Himself and took on Him the form of a servant, and whom God had highly exalted, giving Him a name which is above every name. Equally significant were the symbols of the two manifestations. In both cases they were borrowed from the field of nature. The one was a star, the other a corn of wheat. The star of the wise men of the East—the watchers of the midnight heavens—was changeless as the life and religion of the East. It kept its place in the heavens from age to age. It rose and set and moved in its orbit for ever the same. The corn of wheat of the Greeks —those restless searchers into the meaning of everything on earth—grew to more and more, and exhibited all

the changes and variations of life. The one was a symbol of the night with its dreams and mysteries and spiritual thoughts; the other of the day with its stern facts and active duties and daily bread. The corn of wheat reminds us of a similar agricultural symbol which Jesus employed in the manifestation of Himself to the Samaritan woman—intermediate between the two other Epiphanies. He spoke in the case of the Samaritans of "fields already white unto the harvest"; He showed to the Greeks, within a few days of the cross, that these wide fields of golden grain were to be the produce of one corn of wheat, falling into the ground and multiplying by its death.

Putting aside the first manifestation of our Lord to the wise men of the East, let us look for a little at the second manifestation, to the wise men of the West. On the last occasion on which our Lord appeared openly in the Temple of Jerusalem—crowded at the time with pilgrims from all parts of the world who had come to keep the Passover—certain Greeks wished to be introduced to Him. Instead of going directly into His presence, they accosted Philip, one of His disciples, and said to him in the most courteous manner, "Sir, we would see Jesus." This was but another form of the old question which the wise men of the East had asked, when they came to Jerusalem, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" The Greeks were probably induced to address Philip because he alone of the disciples had a Greek name, derived perhaps from the tetrarch Philip—or more probably

from his parents' familiarity with some of the Greek-speaking population who lived mingled with the Galileans on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. But Philip did not at once carry their message to Jesus. He was deterred by the unusual character of the incident, and by a feeling of dubiety as to how his Master would regard so singular a request. He went and consulted his fellow-townsman Andrew; and the two disciples then made known the wish of the Greeks to Jesus, and in all likelihood introduced the inquirers into His presence. The wise men of the East were guided to Christ by a star, a dead silent object of nature. But the Greeks were guided to Him by the living voice and hand of man; by the hand of the very disciples, Philip and Andrew, who first found Jesus themselves on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and led others of the disciples into His presence. And how characteristic was this circumstance of the difference between the Orientals and the Greeks! The Orientals shaped their philosophy and religion in the changeless desert, under the passionless starry heavens, from the calm contemplation of the objects of nature which entered so largely into their worship. The Greeks shaped their philosophy and religion amid the ever-changing haunts of man, and in contact with the busy work of everyday life. Not through the sympathy of nature, but through the fellowship of man, did they rise to their conception of man's origin and destiny, and their solution of the profound mysteries which surround his present and future. It was fitting therefore that they should be

guided to Christ, in whom all their hopes should be fulfilled, and all their mysteries solved, not by a star but by their fellow-men. And their guidance is a type of ours—the higher leading in which, not by dumb dead signs and wonders in heaven or earth, but by the living sympathy and the articulate teaching of men of like passions and experiences with ourselves, we are brought to the personal knowledge of the Saviour.

No incident in the life of our Saviour produced a more profound impression upon Him than this. It was no idle curiosity that brought these Greeks to His side. They had much of the spirit of their immortal countrymen, Plato and Socrates, who all their life were earnest inquirers after truth, unconscious seekers after the living and true God. Despised and hated by His own people for whom He had done so much, the modest, reverential spirit, the simple faith and spontaneous devotion of these aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, must have been as refreshing to the weary heart of the Redeemer as a well in a wilderness to a traveller parched with thirst. He recognised all the significance of the moment. He regarded the request of this little band of Greeks to see Him as a happy augury of the universal triumph of His gospel. He knew that although salvation was of the Jews, it was not to be confined to them; that although He was sent, so far as the conditions of His earthly mission were concerned, only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, His work was to be for the whole world. The hour was now come, He felt, when the Son of man should

be glorified, when He should be revealed in His true character as the Saviour of both Jews and Gentiles, and His salvation should go forth to the ends of the earth. With prescient eye He read at that moment the future in store for His gospel in connection with these Greeks. And what a wonderful future it was! It must never be forgotten that it was the Greeks who first welcomed Christianity; and there cannot be a more striking contrast than between the eagerness with which they received the blessed truth, "God manifest in the flesh," and the difficulty which even the Jewish Christians had in realising its full significance. It was in the Greek tongue that it first addressed its divine message to the world. It was in the cities and homes of the Greeks that it first displayed its wonderful power of assimilating and transforming all the elements of life, and manifested what it should afterwards become in human society. The gods of Hellas were the first to fall down before the ark of the Son of God; and when He died on the cross, it is touchingly said that a wailing voice was heard through all the hills and forests of Greece, crying, "Great Pan is dead.' Indeed it is difficult to conceive what form Christianity might have assumed had not Greek faith first illustrated its saving truths; or how it would have prospered in the world had not the Greeks of earlier days spread their language and philosophy throughout all lands.

What the world owes to the Greeks no tongue can sufficiently tell. From them we have received the sublime poems and splendid treatises on science and philosophy

which have educated all the higher minds of the human race. From them we have received the matchless sculptures, paintings, and architectural glories which have filled men's souls with visions of ideal beauty. From them we have received the inestimable legacy of our Greek New Testament, which is the light of our feet and the lamp of our path to immortality. It is to them we owe the boon for which we should never cease to be thankful, that the sacred Scriptures passed from the calm lonely lethargic scenes of nature in the East, associated with the infancy and early youth of our race, to the busy stimulating scenes of the West, associated with its manhood; that the lofty, vague Hebrew language, the very language of the loneliness and grandeur of nature, has been translated into the quick, precise, many-mooded Greek, the very language of business and active human life; that the stately oracles of prophets living in deserts, addressing men afar off and from pedestals high above them, have become the familiar epistles of apostles coming constantly into personal contact with the sins, sorrows, and wants of humanity. From them we have received the noble works of the early Greek fathers of the Church, Justin, Origen, Gregory, Chrysostom, Athenagoras, Basil, Cyril of Jerusalem, and John of Damascus, which have proved such invaluable helps in expounding the sacred Scriptures. From them we have received the grand liturgies, the inspiring hymns, the glorious triumphs of martyrs, and the devoted lives of saints, which have stimulated the piety and fired the enthusiasm of all Christian churches ever since. The Greeks

gathered together, as it were, all that was grandest and most enduring in the world, and, holding it up in their arms for the baptism of Christianity, handed it on thus purified and blessed for the blessing of all after ages. All these great associations crowd upon our minds as we think of the interview of the Greeks with Jesus. They represented all this culture and all these prospective benefits to mankind. We see here the watershed of a stream that was destined in its flowing on to make the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. We see here the light falling upon a mountain-top—from whence it was to spread down into the valley, and out over all the plains until the whole world should be illuminated.

In the request of the Greeks to see Jesus there was far more than a mere private request of a few individuals. In their courteous but eager desire we hear the longing of the whole heathen world for a Redeemer. A great crisis in human history had come. It well deserved to be called "the fulness of time." Everything seemed to have come to an end; the goal of human effort had been reached. Among the Jews the Old Testament canon was closed, and the voice of prophecy hushed, and Sadducean scepticism and Pharisaic trivialities had taken the place of the grand old Hebrew faith. Among the Gentiles the old rites and superstitions had lost their hold upon men's minds. Jupiter and Mars, Apollo and Venus, had all faded from the imaginations of the higher classes; and the worship of these

deities was left to the vulgar and ignorant, or was retained only as a matter of policy. The oracles were dumb; the altars cold and deserted; and some tried in vain to satisfy their wants by changing religion into poetry or philosophy, or sought as a last resource to fill with sensual pleasure the intolerable vacuity of their hearts. Regretful of the past, hopeless of the future, suicide was recommended as the only cure for human misery; the darkness of despair giving place to the deeper darkness of death. But even in the utter blankness of such a night, there were men of nobler instincts who could not do without religion—who, to use Hegel's beautiful words, were "Memnons waiting for the day." They felt about for the unknown God to whom they might cry for help amid the wreck of every religious system, and the failures and uncertainties of the world around. Some of these "seekers after God," men of the stamp of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, had wandered into Jewish synagogues, which by a providential coincidence at that time were placed in all the chief cities of the world; and there they found to their surprise, in what they had been taught to regard as an "execrable superstition," ledges of faith and hope by which they climbed out of the profound darkness into the happy sunshine. They were irresistibly drawn to the new religion by its unity of the Godhead, its high ideal of domestic and social purity, and above all by the hope which it held out of a coming Messiah who should redress all the evils of the world, dispel its ignorance, and bring in not a cold morality, but

a righteousness which should be the offspring of a burning love. Not a few of these proselytes to the Jewish faith went up as pilgrims to the great annual festival in Jerusalem; and among them were the Greeks who wished to see Jesus. They expressed the longing of the whole heathen world for Him who should interpret and satisfy their longing, and who should be a light to lighten the Gentiles as well as the glory of His people Israel.

Very remarkable was the adaptation of our Lord's words to the circumstances of these Greeks, to whom doubtless He addressed them. He had been teaching His own disciples at this period the necessity and grand design of His death. He took every opportunity of showing them that it behoved the Christ to suffer and thus to enter into His glory. He appealed in proof thereof to the Old Testament Scriptures, and instructed them in the things concerning a suffering Messiah. But this method of teaching was manifestly unsuitable to the Greeks, who, if they had any knowledge, could have but a very imperfect one of the Jewish Scriptures. And therefore He taught them by an object-lesson. He condescended to their ignorance and brought before their minds a familiar parable from the still older Testament of nature. He showed them that His own self-sacrifice was only the highest exemplification of that which underlay all the processes of nature, and without which the glory and blessedness of the world could not be unfolded. The very first seed that germinated on our earth was a mute prophecy of the Lamb slain from the

foundation of the world. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

A corn of wheat is beautiful and complete in itself. It is full of latent life; it contains the germ of boundless harvests. But it is hard and narrow and isolated. How then are its dormant capabilities to be quickened; how is its narrow horizon of life to be widened; how are its possibilities of unknown good to become actualities? Clearly not by keeping it as it is. In its present state it abideth alone. It can never be anything else but a hard, bare, dormant corn of wheat if kept out of the ground. But if sown in the field, and covered by the earth, and quickened by the sunshine and showers of heaven, it softens and expands. It seems to die. It surrenders itself to the forces of nature which enter into it, and take possession of it, and seem to put it altogether aside. But this apparent death is in reality more abundant life. Its burial-place becomes the scene of a wonderful resurrection. The spark of vitality has been kindled by the very elements that seemed to work its destruction. The embryo grows at the expense of the decomposing perisperm. Lengthening downwards by the radicle and upwards by the plumule, the seed becomes a bright, green, beautiful plant which lays all nature under contribution for its sustenance, borrows the materials of growth from earth and sky, and at length becomes a luxuriant stalk of corn laden with its fruitful ear,

containing sixty or a hundred such grains as it sprang from itself, and thus becoming the prolific parent of countless harvests in the future. The seed that has been sacrificed in the sowing comes again in the harvest, as the sum and organisation of the very forces that had laid it aside. And in the mirror of that familiar, but mysterious process of nature, Jesus saw a beautiful picture of His own atoning death, and the great results that should spring from it. He was the life of the world; but he could only reach and benefit the world by His death. The gospel in its fulness and saving power could not be preached to these Greeks till He Himself should die. Not merely by His life of holy obedience and sublime self-sacrifice, but also by His atoning death, He finished the work which His Father had given Him to do. It was needful for the fruitfulness of the dead world that the Divine seed should be put into the ground, in the new sepulchre in the garden. And what a wonderful, world-wide, time-long harvest has sprung from that grave, the hiding-place of God's power, where by dying death was destroyed, and life and immortality brought to light! The harvest that has grown from it is everywhere visible. It is covering larger and larger spaces of the earth every day; and all nations are destined to eat of its fruit and know its saving health and rejoice with the joy of harvest. Thus Jesus lost His own life, but He found it again in the life of others, to whom He had imparted life. His personality became enlarged and increased by that very self-sacrifice which seemed at the time to

have destroyed it. During His lifetime He had little or no success; and His death itself was the measure of the unbelief of the world in Him, and the failure of His efforts. But after His death, men in larger and still larger numbers believed in Him as the Saviour of the world.

The darkness and dreariness of the closing years of our Lord's life, in which the Divine seed was shed, and the entombment in the garden sepulchre, have their counterpart in nature. Seed time in this country is in spring. The sower goes forth to sow when the day is lengthening and brightening, and a softer blue is in the sky and a warmer and more tender feeling is in the air. The dark days and wild storms of winter are over; and before the seed sown there is an almost uninterrupted continuance of genial weather till the harvest. But in nature seed-time is at the close of autumn, when "the melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year." The important process of scattering the seed over the waste places of the earth is accomplished amid the fading and falling of leaves, and the destruction of nature's strength and beauty. The chill air and feeble sunlight put a stop to all further growth; and the dreary rain and boisterous storms which prevail at this season are needed to shake down the ripe fruits from stem or bough, to scatter them over the face of the earth, and to rot them in the ground, so that the imprisoned seeds may escape and find a suitable soil in which to grow. Thus, the dark ungenial weather which so often proves

disastrous to our cereal crops when they are about to be gathered into the barn, is a wise provision of nature to facilitate the dispersion of the ripened fruits and seeds of the earth. We step between nature and her purpose, snatch the corn from its appointed destiny as the seed of a future crop, and convert it into human food; and thus diverting a law of nature into a new channel, we cannot always expect that the weather which would be favourable to the natural process should be equally favourable to the artificial. Nature fulfils her designs perfectly; she is faithful to the law of her God. But when she comes into contact with man she does not harmonise with his designs. The primeval curse rests upon the toil of man's hands, and the earning of man's bread; and nature therefore will not give us her blessings without a stern struggle with hostile elements. How true is all this of the stormy end of our Saviour's life; that dreary autumn seed-time of which He said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." And further, how true of His entombment is the natural fact that the seed thus sown in the decaying autumn, amid the wreck of life and beauty, and to the wailing dirge of the devastating storm, lies passive and inert in the soil all the winter, chilled with the frosts, drenched with the rains, and buried in its grave of darkness beneath a shroud of snow, waiting for its resurrection under the bright skies of spring. It is all a parable from beginning to end of that truth which seems so strange and

incomprehensible, that death and increase go together—that the growth of every germ in nature and in human life must be in darkness and suffering.

But in this parable of nature there was a special lesson for the Greeks. We see the same suitableness in the symbol of the corn of wheat in their case that we see in the symbol of the star in the case of the Wise Men of the East. No doubt there are traces of the great truth of life only through death, of the true life of man through the denial of his lower nature, to be found in the history and literature of the Greeks. In some of their immortal dramas the mystery of sorrow is shown to us as lying at the root of all that is noblest in the world; and there are splendid examples of heroic self-sacrifice which the world will not willingly let die. But as a rule, the entire constitution and culture of the Greeks led them not to the darker and more mysterious, but to the sunnier side, of life, whose limits should everywhere be seen. The great characteristic of Greek sculpture, Greek architecture, Greek literature is its limitation. It is perfect of its kind, like an isolated corn of wheat kept out of the ground, but it is a very limited perfection. In a Greek tragedy or a Greek temple the first impression of absolute and limited beauty will be deepened by further study, but it will never expand. There is no striving as in all true modern art and literature, after that which is incomprehensible because without and above themselves; no room for development, because there is no mystery of suffering. Even their music—that art

in which more than in any other, all that is truest and deepest in a nation finds utterance—dividing as it did the octaves into tetrachords, and proceeding in its most approved form, the enharmonic by quarter terms—differed as widely from the wild, wailing, infinitely varied music of northern lands, as the Doric pillars of a Greek temple from the tangled forest of Gothic foliage. Look at a Greek statue; how beautiful; how symmetrical! It is faultless, judging it by the rules of art. But that is not your conception of a god. It is limited and circumscribed by its very beauty and perfection. The ideal of that marble divinity knew nothing of the majesty of sorrow and the nobleness of self-sacrifice. It was the fatal flaw in the Greek religion that it represented the gods of Olympus as beings who lived only to enjoy themselves, and who, when they descended to earth, came only for the sake of pleasant adventure or selfish amusement, caring nothing for the sins and sorrows of humanity. And we are not surprised that such conceptions should have exercised so little wholesome influence upon the manners of the people; that the highest perfection of Greek art should have been associated with the lowest corruption of human morals. There is everything in the Apollo Belvidere and the Venus de Medici to satisfy the love of beauty, but there is nothing there to appeal to the conscience or touch the heart. There is no sympathy with the deepest things in human life.

And like their gods was the national Greek character. It was changeable, capricious, imaginative, without any

fixed earnestness or purpose. It could be said of the Greeks emphatically that they loved their life, and cherished it by every means in their power. They lived in the eye of nature, in a climate divinely fair, in a land where mountain, valley, and sea combined their charms into a focus of exquisite loveliness. They loved all beautiful things, and strove to give them an immortal permanence in their art and poetry. The Theocritian idyll was to them a simple fact. Enjoyment of the senses, of the intellect, of the imagination was their highest conception of life. The development of all their powers and faculties in the gymnasium and the academic grove, was their highest ideal of duty. But Jesus told the representatives of the Greek race who came to see Him that this view of life was altogether narrow and unworthy. It did not account for its most solemn things; it did not take in its greatest mysteries, its future hopes, the sin and misery that reigned in the world, and the death that closed up every vista of it. It left out of sight the whole region of the conscience and the moral nature; it did not recognise that righteousness which unifies our being, and imparts to our whole nature and existence that imputation and discipline of godliness, without which the cultivation of the separate faculties is a process of death and not of life. And it had proved in their own experience a failure; it had failed to satisfy the wants of the higher natures among them; and it was undoubtedly the cause of their decadence as a race. He told them that in order to lead a true human life, that which they called

life—the unrestrained gratification and exercise of all the powers and passions of human nature—must be hated and abandoned. They must choose either to lose the life of sense, that beautiful, sunny, selfish life, free from thought and care, which they loved, and so gain the life of the spirit; or else to lose the higher, enduring life of the spirit, and win the passing perishing life of sense. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; but he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal."

And how truly were these words fulfilled in the history of the Greek race! They had loved their life and they had lost it. At the time of our Saviour they had sunk to the lowest point morally, socially, politically. All that represented their glorious past, all that constituted the splendour of the age of Pericles, was gone. The imperial despotism of Rome had blighted them with its shadow. Their development had stopped, and their capacity for blessing mankind was over. They had apparently lived their time; and there was no future before them. They were like the cold, hard corn of wheat that abideth alone, in an isolated death in life; the result of a previous splendid growth indeed, but incapable of future growth because kept out of the ground, living for themselves. But Christianity came to these Greeks, the religion of Him who gave the pattern and the power of self-sacrifice, and it gave them a new character and a new life. The seed was planted in that most helpful soil, and it got a fresh start, it became softened and immeasurably enlarged and

enriched. Belief in the gospel gave them as a race a deeper earnestness, a tenderer sympathy, a greater power of devotion and endurance than they had ever known before. It taught them ideas of sin and holiness of which their philosophy had been ignorant. It unfolded to them principles and capabilities in human nature to which their artistic genius had blinded them. It enabled them to produce the noble virtues which grow from the Christian doctrine of a crucified and risen Redeemer, and which their own poetically beautiful worship could not have inspired. By taking up their cross, denying themselves and following Christ, they were saved as a nation in the hour of their peril, when their own magnificent civilisation had proved its utter helplessness. They hated their life, and they kept it grander and richer. That the Greek race, which has contributed so large a proportion of the materials that have made ourselves what we are, has survived to this day, is owing mainly, as Dean Church has so admirably shown in his *Influences of Christianity on National Character*, to the fact that it comprehended and acted in some measure, upon the great truth which Christ proclaimed to the Greeks who came at Jerusalem to see Him ; viz., that it is only in self-sacrifice, in dying to selfishness and sensuality, dying in the faith and love of Christ Jesus to all that is base and mean and frivolous in human nature, that we develop a grander and more abundant life. And through a clearer recognition of that truth, the Greek race will yet perform a nobler part on the stage which the recent events in Europe

have been preparing for it. And the words in Greek, "Jesus Christ conquers," placed by its Christian builder on the bronze gates of St. Sophia in Constantinople, and still remaining after all those centuries of desecration as a Mohammedan mosque, will receive new meaning and fulfilment when the crescent has given way before the cross.

For us too there is a profound lesson in the words of Jesus to the Greeks. The symbol of nature in the corn of wheat has a spiritual significance even for those who by their science have shut out from nature the glimpses which made the pagans less forlorn. We are all Greeks in our childhood and youth. Our existence in the young and formative age, before we go out into the world to encounter its sins and sorrows, is like the river Jordan when it rises at Banias amid the lovely landscapes at the foot of Hermon, associated with the sunny nature-worship of Pan that has intruded there into the Holy Land, ere it passes farther down the bare and rugged defiles of Judea under the spell of a truer and severer faith. The old Greek ideal of life is just the natural ideal of every man who wishes to live for himself, and to make everything subservient to his own interest or enjoyment. To live a life of self-indulgence, whether in the higher form of intellectual activity and æsthetic culture, or in the lower form of sensual pleasures, to be occupied only with the things of this world, to disregard the accusations of conscience and the warnings of death, to skim over the surface of life and look only at its sunny scenes, to

leave the world to struggle and sin on as it may, while caring only for the gratification of our own tastes—that is the pagan life, the life of nature. And living that Epicurean life we shall assuredly lose our true Christian life. We shall be like the seed which is kept out of the ground; which not only loses the harvest which it might have produced, but the very life which it already possesses. Everything is hostile to the seed so long as it remains useless as a seed. The rust and the mildew will seize it: the very air will shrivel and waste it. Some seeds rapidly lose their power of germinating: others possess a marvellous persistency of vital force. But even admitting the truth of the sprouting of hermetically-sealed mummy wheat when sown, there is a limit to the vitality of the longest lived seeds when exposed to the air. In the end, every seed, if kept out of the ground, perishes, and becomes a mere husk, full of dust and ashes. And so those who live only for their own enjoyment, who make their own personal pains and pleasures the pivot upon which turns the entire conduct of life, not only deprive themselves of the higher joys and hopes of humanity, of the blessings of doing good and communicating,—they do not simply prevent the development of their being by refusing the sacrifice of self; but they inevitably lose whatever measure of spiritual life they already possess, and their unfulfilled vocation and unsatisfied desires will consume them like a tormenting rust.

Some ideal of life nobler than this Epicurean one, embracing a wider scope than personal interest or

pleasure is surely needed in this luxurious age and country of ours, when the question, "Is life worth living?" is asked, not from pressure of dire want and trouble, but from very fulness of enjoyment. And such an ideal has been given to us by Him who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." A striking experiment has been tried of sowing oats and wheat together, in order that the one might shelter and foster the growth of the other. The two kinds of grain were sown on the same day at the end of August. The oats sprang up rapidly, but the tender stalks and blades were killed by the early frosts, and their withered remains lying over the dormant wheat all winter kept the snow from drifting away, and the sun from thawing the frozen ground. Thus sheltered, the wheat grew up in early spring, and, manured by a top dressing of the dead oats, produced a most excellent crop; while the wheat of an adjoining field, sown in the usual manner, was of no value. Such is a picture of the relationship which ought to exist between us and Him in the likeness of whose death and resurrection we should be planted together. The life to which He calls us is a life quickened by His own death for us, that derives all its elements of growth and well-being from His atoning sacrifice, and that lives by the continual sacrifice of self for the glory of God and the good of man. It is the life that we desire to live in those solemn impressive hours that come occasionally to all of us, when sickness or sorrow shows to us the vanity of

all earthly things. And it is assuredly the life we shall wish that we had lived in that most solemn hour of all when we come to die. Shall we not join ourselves to the Greeks and say to-day in our health, in our strength, in our happiness, "We would see Jesus," in order that we may begin that life at once. If so, we shall see Him not as the Magi saw Him in His state of humiliation and suffering before His work on earth was finished; but in His glorified state, seated at the right hand of God, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins. And while like the Wise Men of the East we Gentiles who were far off draw nigh to the cradle of Jesus, and there in gratitude for the humiliation of our Lord offer our gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; let us like the Greeks pass on to the Cross of Christ, that there, filled with unspeakable love and devotion to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, we may bestow, not our gifts only, but ourselves, and live no more unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WIDOW'S POT OF OIL.

"Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor has come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house save a pot of oil. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."—II. KINGS iv. 1-8.

IF we are to believe the voice of tradition as expressed by Josephus, the subject of this touching story was one who had seen far better days, being the widow of Obadiah, the Lord High Chamberlain of Ahab. While her husband lived she breathed the atmosphere

of a court, and was nourished in the lap of luxury. But when he died she seems to have been reduced to the utmost poverty. That world which had smiled upon her in the days of her prosperity, now, with characteristic fickleness, turned its back upon her. Her friends forsook her, and refused to help her. She was plunged into debt, contracted in order to obtain the barest necessaries of life. Having nothing of any value in the house, the hard-hearted creditor, in lieu of payment, threatened to take and sell her two only sons as slaves; which, by virtue of one Jewish law and the extension of another, he had the power to do. It is true that the period during which slaves could be held in Israel was mercifully limited by the year of jubilee, and that year, which would break every fetter, might be near at hand; but nevertheless, in her position, the enforcement of the law even for the shortest period could not but be felt as a grievous calamity. On account of these trying circumstances, her case was one that peculiarly warranted the interposition of Heaven. But she had another claim still, beside that of her wretchedness, upon the sympathy and help of Elisha. Her husband feared the Lord while he lived. He was the son of a prophet, and cherished the deepest regard for the person and the work of those who filled that sacred office. If he was, indeed, Obadiah, the steward of Ahab—and there seems no reason to doubt the Jewish tradition which thus identifies the husband of the widow—then the sacred story informs us that during the fierce persecution of the prophets of Israel by

Jezebel, he took an hundred of these prophets, and, at the peril of his life, hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water during the whole continuance of the famine.

Let us look for a moment at the beauty and significance of Obadiah's devotion on this occasion. Most interesting is it to find that while beyond the confines of Israel, the widow of Zarephath was sustaining the prophet of the Lord by the barrel of meal that wasted not, and by the cruse of oil that did not fail, Obadiah, in the court of Israel—in the very centre of that wickedness which had brought the curse of desolation upon the land—was sustaining the hidden prophets of the Lord by a zeal that never tired, and a patient tenderness that never wore out. We see the hand of God in both these parallel incidents; in the one as clearly as in the other. The replenishing of the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil that supported Elijah was the doing of the Lord; the maintaining of the love and devotion in Obadiah's heart, whereby in the midst of almost insurmountable difficulties and innumerable dangers he failed not, for three years and a half, to support the hundred true prophets under his care, was also the doing of the Lord. The one was a specimen of God's working in the field of nature and providence; the other was a specimen of God's working in the field of the human heart; and both are wonderful in our eyes. How striking a proof of God's care for His servants do these two correlated examples afford! There was a curse of drought and famine

upon all the land; thousands came to want and probably perished; but Jehovah's servants were preserved, and had enough to eat and drink. An unclean bird and a heathen widow—a Baal-worshipper from Jezebel's native country—ministered to the wants of Elijah; a courtier, a servant of Ahab and Jezebel, ministered to the others.

Obadiah's devotion on this occasion may have greatly encroached upon the provision which he may have been making for his family after his death. He may have spent upon the prophets of the Lord what he meant for his own wife and children. That the expense of feeding such a multitude for such a long period must have been very great is at once apparent when we consider that food was all the time at famine prices, and also that in order to convey this food to the hiding-places of the prophets he must have employed many servants, paid them well for their work, and perhaps even bribed them to conceal it lest it should come to the ears of his mistress, and prove fatal to the prophets and to himself. Like Joseph in Pharaoh's court, like Daniel in Babylon—the upright and pious chamberlain in the palace of Ahab did not take advantage of his opportunities of enriching himself, as the officers of eastern monarchs have so often done. On the contrary, he spent his fortune in benefiting the needy, and died poor. On this ground his widow might well appeal to Elisha for assistance. He who had given at the risk of his life and with the loss of his substance bread and water to the starving

prophets of the Lord, might now in the persons of his representatives, in great straits, expect a prophet's reward.

Elisha's first question to her evinced a wonderful knowledge of the human heart, and of the best mode of dealing with poverty and suffering. Instead of volunteering to give her aid at once, as most persons would have done, carried away by an overpowering impulse of compassion at the recital of the tale of sorrow; like a wise and judicious friend, he inquires how far she herself has the power to avert the threatened calamity—"What hast thou in the house?" His assistance must be based upon her own assistance. He will help her to help herself. And this is the only true way to benefit the poor. By reckless and indiscriminate almsgiving, by wholesale gifts of money, we run the risk of pauperising the objects of our charity. Our assistance should therefore be of such a nature as to call forth the resources which they themselves possess, and to make the most of them. However small these resources may be, they should be used as a fulcrum, by means of which our help may raise them to a better condition. The first question which we too should ask the widow or the destitute is—"What hast thou in the house?" No help from without can benefit, unless there be a willingness of self-help within. Of course such a mode as this of administering charity is more troublesome, and requires a greater expenditure of time and self-denial, than the plan, which is far too common, of throwing a dole to a beggar to get rid of his

importunity, and to save ourselves the annoyance of his wretchedness. But putting him in the way of helping himself will be truer charity than any gift of money.

The widow of Obadiah had nothing in the house save a pot of oil. Was this oil grown by Obadiah during his lifetime—the last of the produce of his olive-yard? In all likelihood it was all that remained of the once extensive property of Ahab's steward. Out of this last pot of oil—the sign of her uttermost poverty—Elisha furnished the source of her comfort and happiness. Like Elijah, who made the handful of meal and the cruse of oil already existing an unwasting provision for each new day's want; like a greater than Elijah, whose miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes took its point of departure into the supernatural from the common barley loaves and fishes before Him, so Elisha in the case of Obadiah's widow made the produce of nature and of man's labour the basis of his wonderful act. In the fables of all nations we are told that a magician, by a mere wave of his wand, or by pronouncing a certain charm, produces at once wealth and luxuries that had no existence before. Aladdin rubs a ring, and immediately a genius appears, and at his command provides a rich feast for him out of nothing. He rubs an old lamp, and at once a gorgeous palace rises up before him in substantial reality, created out of the formless ether around. By putting on Fortunatus's wishing-cap the lucky possessors of it can get anything they want, and create things unknown before. But there is nothing like this in the miracles of the Bible. The

prophets and godly men of old were no such magicians as these. Their most wonderful works are in beautiful accordance with the wise laws of labour and economy which pervade the ordinary arrangements of life. Even the miracles of Christ, which approached nearest to creations out of nothing, rested upon a fulcrum of existing materials, by means of which their supernatural leverage was exerted. We nowhere read that He created anything which had no existence before. Such a miracle would have been contrary to the analogy of His whole work of redemption. Jesus on earth was a Redeemer, not a Creator. He came for the purpose of removing the curse of sin that lay upon the old world, which He had created once for all, and which He had pronounced very good; and not for the purpose of making a new world. He came to make all things new—not by a new creation, but by the purification of the old; and the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, as well as of St. Peter and St. Paul, were all wrought for the same purpose, and in conformity with and anticipation of this glorious *restitution of all things*.

The Gospel miracle which most nearly resembles the multiplication of the widow's oil by Elisha, is the miracle of the loaves and fishes. In both cases the properties of the articles remained the same, and their substance only was extended. In both cases the point of departure and the completed result of the miracle were articles in familiar use among the people. Elisha simply multiplied the common olive oil of the widow into the common olive oil of the country, neither better nor worse. Jesus

simply multiplied the common barley loaves and fishes of the fisher-lad into the common barley loaves and fishes which formed the ordinary fare of the disciples. In both cases the miracle was based upon the ultimate result of man's labour. The oil in the widow's pot was the juice expressed, out of berries gathered, from trees planted, grafted, and tended by man's toil and skill. The bread in the fisherman's possession was baked by man's hands, out of barley sown, reaped, gathered, threshed, and ground in the mill by man's skill and labour; the fishes were equally the produce of human industry and special knowledge. These examples show to us that even in miracles man must be a fellow-worker with God in subduing the earth, and in removing the limitations and disabilities of the curse. And this idea is further illustrated by the command laid by Elisha upon the widow to furnish vessels for the miraculous oil. "Go borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few; and when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all these vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full." This procedure is exactly similar to that of the disciples in distributing the loaves and fishes to the multitude—to that of the servants at Cana in drawing the water and bearing it to the governor of the feast. To common sense these actions might seem absurd; and, therefore, men were enjoined to do them in order to prove their faith in God—to show that they could have implicit confidence in His word, even in regard to things which might

appear contrary to reason and experience. In these actions men prepared themselves by the miracle wrought within them—the triumph over natural unbelief and the objections of reason—to believe in and to benefit by the miracle about to be wrought without.

The widow of Obadiah might well be astonished at the command of Elisha. If she had stopped to reason about the procedure required of her, she might well hesitate to undertake it. Taking a common-sense view of the matter, of what use would it be to borrow as many vessels as possible from her neighbours? What answer could she give them if they asked her what she meant to do with these vessels? Would they not laugh at her if she told the prophet's message, and ridicule the utter folly of the whole story? Would she not seem to herself playing at a child's game in pouring her pot of oil into the empty vessels? Did any one ever know of any good coming of pouring oil from vessel to vessel? The quantity could not possibly be increased by the process. The pot of oil would still be only a pot of oil, though spread over a thousand vessels. And yet, in spite of all these apparent absurdities and impossibilities—in spite of all the objections of reason and common sense, the widow hastened to obey the prophet's command. She stumbled not because of unbelief. Her faith triumphed over all difficulties. She had implicit confidence in Elisha's word, although she knew not what he was about to do; and in this way she proved herself to be a fit subject for having the miracle performed for her. She fulfilled the

condition upon which alone a miracle can be wrought—"Believest thou that I can do this?"

It is a significant circumstance that the prophet should have commanded the widow to shut the door upon herself and her sons, when she poured out the oil into the vessels. There is a reason for, and a meaning in, every detail of the Bible miracles; and doubtless the design of this apparently trivial injunction was to secure to the widow the privacy and calmness of mind necessary for the performance of the miracle, and for its producing the full and proper impression upon her own soul. If she had left the door open, the neighbours doubtless, moved by curiosity to see what she would do with the vessels she had borrowed, would flock around her, and sadly discompose her mind by their laughter, their sneers, and their unsuitable remarks. Reverence, stillness, and solitude are needed for the miracle, and therefore the door must be shut, and the unsympathetic world must be excluded. It is not in the crowd that God works His wonders in nature and grace—it is in the lonely place, to the solitary individual. Who is it that sees the grander revelations of nature, but he who turns his back upon the human multitude, and seeks communion with her alone in the sanctuary of her hills and desert-places? It was to Moses, the solitary shepherd who led his flock to the back of Horeb, and turned aside to behold the great sight, that the burning bush appeared. It was before Elijah in a cave, in the same wild, lonely region, that the terror and the mercy of Jehovah passed by in the whirlwind, the fire, and the

still small voice. We must enter into our closet and shut the door, if our prayer is to be indeed such a communion with our Father who seeth in secret, as will transfigure us into His likeness, and make us, when we come out into the world, strong to do and bear all His will. In two of the mightiest miracles of Jesus we see strikingly manifested the different treatment given to humble reverence and to rude unbelief. The boisterous crowd of hired mourners were put out of the house of Jairus, and they saw not the mighty miracle which Jesus did. If they had not laughed Him who is the resurrection and the life to scorn, they might have obtained such an outlook into the life beyond the grave in that house, as would have enabled them to laugh death to scorn. While, on the other hand, we read that when Jesus touched the bier of the widow of Nain's son, the bearers stood still. They were struck by a sudden consciousness that they were in the presence of One who had a right to stop them, even in their progress to the tomb; and they waited silently and reverently for what He might say or do; and they had the unspeakable privilege of witnessing the mighty act which would in future change for them the shadow of death into the morning.

But, besides being necessary in order to prepare the widow of Obadiah for receiving the benefits of the miracle, the solitude and secrecy which Elisha enjoined were significant of the mysterious character of the miracle itself. It was withdrawn from sight. It was silent and unimaginable. It was veiled in the same

obscurity as all creative acts—as all beginnings. It was out of darkness and in darkness that the world was created; and it is in darkness that all the natural processes that approximate most closely to creations take place. The seed germinates, or, in other words, multiplies itself in darkness; animal life begins in the mysterious secrecy of the womb; formless matter crystallises in the sunless caves of the earth into more than the glory of living flowers. Who catches the exact moment when the evening star first twinkles in the transparent blue? Who has noticed the unfolding of the full-blown rose from the bud? God's arm wrought unseen for Israel in the bosom of the dark cloud which rested over the Red Sea all the night: and in the morning the dry path was revealed between the crystal walls of water. The veil of darkness concealed the falling of the manna from heaven: and the dawn only disclosed it as it whitened the tawny sand of the desert around the tents of Israel. We cannot trace beginnings, or behold creative acts; they are hid in the secret place of God's thundering; they are kept beyond all our researches in the hiding-places of God's power. Verily God hideth Himself—shuts, as it were, the door upon all His origins and commencements, and leaves us baffled outside. Science, and religion, and all life bring us back to an unfathomable mystery—a closed door, whose magic "Sesame" no human being can utter.

How great must have been the astonishment of the widow when, pouring into the first vessel a quantity

of oil from her pot, the vessel filled immediately after the first few drops; and the same thing happened as she passed from vessel to vessel, each filling to the brim as soon as she poured a little from her own store into it; until at the end, pouring the last remaining drops into the last vessel, her own stock of oil and the supply from heaven failed together. She could not understand the extraordinary occurrence, though it took place under her own hand. The process by which the oil was multiplied we, too, labour in vain to conceive. We cannot explain the phenomenon by the observation of any known laws; and yet in truth the miracle is not more strange, save in the rapidity with which it is effected, than that which is every day going forward in nature in those regions where the olive-tree grows. You sow the seed of an olive tree; that seed contains a very small quantity of oil. It grows and becomes a tree and produces an immense quantity of fruit; so that from the little drop of oil in the small vessel of the seed, you have thousands of vessels in the shape of the berries, each filled with oil. He who makes the olive-seed in the course of a few years, or the olive-tree every season, to prepare and extract oil from the scanty soil on the arid rocks, and the dry burning air in which the tree delights to grow, concentrated, in the miracle in the widow's chamber, the slower processes of nature spread over months and years, into the act of single moment. Of course the natural process does not explain the miracle, but it is a help to our faith. The one sheds light upon the other.

The miracle teaches us that the natural process is not the result of an impersonal law or of a dead course of things, but the working of our Father in heaven; while the natural process in its turn shows to us that God in the miracle is working in the line of the ordinary events and dispensations of His providence.

Awestruck and filled with amazement, the widow went and told the man of God what had happened. She asked for counsel in the strange and unexpected emergency. She needed assurance of the reality and permanence of this marvellous good fortune. The oil might vanish as mysteriously as it came. She did not know what to do with it. How calmly the prophet receives her! He is not astonished at what she tells him. He knew what would happen. And does not this show a wonderful amount of faith and confidence in God on the part of Elisha? Does it not impart a striking confirmation to the truth of the words, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Elisha told the widow to sell the miraculous oil and pay her debt with the price of it, and use what she could not sell as food for herself and her children. This feature of the miracle brings it into close relation with the gathering of the basketfuls of fragments by the disciples after the feeding of the multitude, and the preserving of the fragments for future use in daily life, when no miracle would be wrought for them. Just as the manna blended with the corn of Canaan, and the fragments of the miraculous loaves took their place among the common daily bread of the world, so

the miraculous oil took its place among the common stores of the merchant, and served its purpose in the homely uses of every-day life. A price was set upon it, and the oil-merchant could not distinguish it from his ordinary stock. The miracle goes no farther than is absolutely necessary. It does not permanently enrich the poor; it provides only for the temporary necessity. The help of Jesus stops at the point when the diseased or disabled man, by being cured, is able to come up with his fellows and keep pace with them in providing for himself. The miracle blends with common life. How strikingly does this wonderful incident show to us that we must be fellow-workers with God *throughout*, from first to last, in our own deliverance and blessing. How wonderfully it illustrates the whole Divine economy of grace, under which we are enjoined to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, seeing that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure!

Thus, in a most interesting manner, was the bread cast upon the waters found after many days. The widow proved in her experience the truth of the Saviour's words, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy;" or, as the phrase should be translated literally, "Blessed are the olive-givers, for olives shall be given to them." Obadiah had poured the oil of his bounty into the afflicted heart of God's servants; and God's servant, in return, gave his widow the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

I might make many practical uses of the widow's pot of oil, for it is full of significance, but I prefer turning the incident into a parable, and using it as an encouragement to prayer. We are all in the condition of the poor widow; we are destitute of everything and are ready to perish. But God is far more tender and considerate to us than Elisha was to the widow. If we have but the feeling of want, but the desire for God's help, that very want or desire will be to us what the pot of oil was to the widow—the source of an abundant supply of all that we need. If we come to God with the longing of our hearts for His salvation, He will come with the fulness of His Godhead, and supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. If we provide vessels, God will furnish the oil with which to fill them. For our own little oil, He will give us overflowing measure; for our feeble desire, He will do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Let us borrow, then, many vessels; let them be empty, nothing of self in them; and let us lay them before Christ, and He will fill them to the brim with the oil of His grace. Gethsemane, the place where He suffered the last agony, means a press for olive oil. From that oil-press of sorrow He will provide a sufficient supply of the oil of gladness for us.

CHAPTER XVII.

SNOW.

"He giveth snow like wool."—PSALM cxlvii. 16.

IN Palestine snow is not the characteristic feature of winter as it is in northern latitudes. It is merely an occasional phenomenon. Showers of it fall now and then in severer seasons on the loftier parts of the land, and whiten for a day or two the vineyards and corn-fields, but it melts from the green earth as rapidly as its sister vapours vanish from the blue sky. The snowy peak of Hermon, the true scene of the Transfiguration, is indeed seen from every elevated point of view—a perpetual vision of winter clothed in raiment whiter than any fuller on earth can whiten it; but this snow-spectre stands spell-bound as it were on the northern threshold of the land, gazing over the smiling summer landscapes, but unable to descend among them, or even chill them with its breath. But the Psalmist seized the occasional snow, as he seized the fleeting vapour, and made it a text for his spiritual meditations. Let us follow his example and make the snow which appears oftener and

remains a longer time with us, lying like a dreary white shroud over the face of nature, the subject of a few timely reflections, and the means of leading our thoughts to things higher and more enduring than itself. Let us write on its fair, white surface the name of God in letters which he who runs may read.

1. Let us look first at its beauty. Every eye can appreciate the stainless purity, the delicate softness of the snow. It makes a spiritual world of this dull, dark earth of ours; and the fields that seemed fit only for the growth of man's food, and the tread of weary feet in the common labours of life—covered with its white immaculate carpet—look like a celestial floor on which white-winged angels on lofty errands of mercy might alight from the kindred heavens. How softly rounded and graceful are its curves as it covers some old wayside wall, or is drifted into wreaths over the common! How picturesque are the forms into which it moulds the outlines of trees and shrubs! Have you ever entered a wood after a snow-storm? If so, you have been admitted into a scene of enchantment, at whose threshold you stand in awe and astonishment. It is a transformation scene in which familiar objects become unreal as shapes in a dream, presenting an appearance similar to the white Liliputian forest into which the microscope changes a bit of fungus mould. It looks like a newly formed world on the morning of creation before the sun has arisen to cast over it a prismatic radiance and baptise it with colour. What a look of sublimity does the snow impart to the

mountain peak, raising it high above all human changes, into a realm of serene, passionless repose, reflecting the light of the great white Throne of which it seems the very footstool! The line of mountain snow on the blue verge of the horizon is the most exquisite of all sculpture. It yields to the eye and mind the purest and most refined enjoyment. From the stainless surface of that Alpine snow comes back the crimson splendour of the sunrise and sunset, like molten gold in the heart of a furnace—the highest earthly of the landscape thus purified into and mingling with the heavenly. Even into the dreary prosaic city the snow enters and transfigures it; the houses become like Aladdin's palace; every cart-rut is fringed with jewels; and over smoke-begrimed railing and miry street is spread the spotless ermine of heaven's investiture.

How significant is the white of the snow! The hue of water in violent agitation—of the foaming cascade and the raging surf—belongs to vapour frozen into calmest permanence. Extremes meet; and the water that on the one side purifies itself by motion, on the other side purifies itself by rest: symbol of the frequently opposite modes of discipline by which God carries on the work of sanctification in the soul. Out of white all the colours spring, and to it they return. All summer hues are gathered back into the uniform radiance of the snow, and we retreat from a world of life and beauty to a world of death and beauty. Nature's coat of many colours gives place to the white raiment with which we clothe the infant in its innocence, the bride

in her purity, and the dead in their rest. Washed by the waves of the world, and refined by the fires of God, the landscape, like a gigantic lily, unfolds its white petals to the sun, and reflects the light in all its integrity and chastity; and thus, clothed in the vestal humility of winter, it is prepared for the many-hued splendours of summer.

But it is to the eye that searches into the heart of things that the snow reveals its most wonderful beauty, for it is of that truest kind which bears the closest inspection. Take one of the myriad snow-flakes which obscure the atmosphere as they fall, and put it under the microscope. It melts almost instantly, but not before you have caught a glimpse of loveliness that astonishes you. It is a perfect crystal, consisting of six rays spreading in the most symmetrical manner from the centre, and often provided with smaller branching rays. Formless and uniform as a wreath of snow looks, it is composed of myriads of such crystals, whose shapes are so exquisite that the eye is never weary of looking at them. Their variety is most wonderful. Thirty different kinds may be observed during any of our own snow-storms; while in high northern latitudes, upwards of a hundred varieties have been delineated that looked as if designed from a kaleidoscope, yet all based upon the simple plan of the six-rayed star. We see in these minute crystals of the storm the sign of the cross, which is impressed upon the whole of nature, and enters in some form or other into all our art and science and literature—thus linking our religious

life with all our ordinary thoughts and labours. When the first command was issued, "Let there be light," that subtle power shot forth into the primeval darkness in the form of an infinitude of crosses, and arranged the chaos of the world into this shape throughout the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. Water freezes and flowers blossom into the form of the cross, and man himself, the crown of creation, assumes it in every outspreading of his hands in prayer. And thus all creation by wearing this sacred symbol upon its bosom testifies of Him who is the true light of the world, who formed the world to be the theatre of redemption, and by the power of His cross brings order out of its confusion and life out of its death.

The snow-crystals are the blossoms of inorganic nature. According to the beautiful system of prefiguration which prevents all abrupt beginnings in nature, and sounds a herald voice of coming glory, the snow-flowers which winter grows in such boundless and careless profusion, foretell by the symmetry of their forms, the blossoms of summer. They seem, indeed, like the ghosts of the departed flowers; the models of the spirit-world after the pattern of which the snow-drop and the lily and the Star of Bethlehem are constructed. They look as if their translucent spiritual beauty needed only the Promethean fire to glow into the rosy life of June. A wreath of snow is thus, indeed, a bank of flowers; and we little think, when walking over its cold and barren surface, that we are treading down at every step a tiny garden. I know of no purer intellectual

joy than that of gazing through the microscope upon these miracles of loveliness; and it is a careless mind indeed that is not impelled to ask whence came these figures so exquisite and yet so frail and fleeting, so full of wonder and yet so long unknown, and still so little recognised by thousands who tread them under foot. Their beauty is not a chance endowment. It is God's hall-mark attesting that the work is His. It is the quality that is superadded to everything that God has made—to the moulding of the fleeting vapour into the sunset cloud, and the unfolding of the brilliant, fragrant flower from the summer sod—in order that our thoughts may be raised from the perishing loveliness of the creature to the enduring glory of the Creator, from the beauty of nature to the beauty of holiness. Such beauty is a reflection of the Divine image—not something that God does, but something that He is, really and suitably a part of Himself. All true beauty is something higher than creation and independent of it, something that God has not made, an attribute as much linked with our conceptions of Him as His wisdom and justice. It awakens that curiosity about God, which is an essential element of worship.

No rightly constituted mind can behold the wealth of beauty in the snow-flowers without being awed and humbled. We see in the fair structure of these inorganic blossoms, as well as in every lovely thing in nature, the transcript of the Divine image originally impressed upon our own souls; and while these fleeting crystals of vapour perfectly obey the laws of their formation, and

exhibit the original beauty stamped upon the first snow-flake, we have perverted our nature and made ourselves unworthy of a world which God has made so fair for us. We stand between two systems, each of which reminds us that we, and we alone, have introduced confusion and defilement into the works of God. The pure snow-covered fields of winter beneath our feet and the pure angel-tenanted starry heavens above our heads, alike testify that we are not in harmony with God's creation. But while there is this wholesome humiliation in the sight of nature's beauty, there is inspiration in it also. Although we have lost the Divine image, it can be restored, and we can be brought again into accordance with the beautiful harmony of the world. As wonderful a transformation can be wrought by the Divine Spirit in our case as is wrought in nature, when the dreary city that speaks only of human toil and sorrow, with its miry ways and sin-stained haunts, is changed by the snow into a city of pearls and diamonds, and looks like a suburb of the celestial city, or when the pure white crystal of the snow-flake is formed out of the polluted ditch-water and falls from the murky cloud. He who arranged the particles of snow into such exquisite shapes of beauty can bring order out of our confusion, and change our vile bodies and spirits into the likeness of Christ's; and He invites the guiltiest and most morally-deformed to come and reason with Him and be subjected to this renewing process, and though our sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.

2. Let us look further at the power of the snow. Can anything be more feeble and delicate than the snow-flakes which the child catches in its tiny hand as they come down waveringly to the ground? Lighter than a feather they fall from the silent sky to the silent earth; more fragile than a foam-bell they melt and disappear before the touch of a finger. And yet these weakest and lightest of all things by their accumulation possess a power which is irresistible, and which is among the most stupendous forces of nature. They can lock up the wheels of labour; they can besiege cities, and shut them out from the rest of the world; they can stop the march of armies, and muffle the landscape into an awful silence. We see countless evidences of the power of the snow around us in winter, and feel how helpless all the boasted appliances of our mechanical skill are to make head against it. In a few hours God's little army of snow-flakes does a work which defies all the resources of man to undo it, and before which he has to pause baffled and defeated. The snow-flakes did what all the united power of Europe could not do: they arrested the triumphant course of Buonaparte, destroyed his invincible army, and paved the way for his overthrow. Were it not for the disastrous effect of the terrible snow-storms of Russia, the destiny of the world might at this moment have been very different. God breathes upon the fleecy vapours that hang light as a veil in the winter sky, abstracts from them a few degrees of heat, and in their fall the largest armies are overwhelmed. The giant locomotive, which carries the commerce of a country

and whose strength seems irresistible is made to stop by the soft but unyielding opposition of the snow-drift. Filling the air with its misty darkness, obliterating all the well-known landmarks, and changing the familiar scene into a trackless waste, the snow-storm bewilders the traveller and baffles his efforts to reach his destination. Into the toil-worn haunts of the city the snow brings an involuntary pause, and bids all the Babel noises be still. What a striking contrast between the soft silent fall of the delicate snow-flakes and the multitudes of noisy men and implements required to remove the fleecy obstructions from the busy highways! God lowers the temperature of the air a few degrees, and immediately man and his works are overwhelmed by a fall of snow. God increases the temperature a few degrees, sends the soft warm south wind, and immediately what all the power and skill of man could not remove, melts away quietly and gently like a dream.

But it is among the mountains that we recognise the full power of the snow. There it crashes down the steep mountain-side in the awful avalanche, crushing the oldest forest before it like a bed of reeds, rending the rock from its foundation, and burying the Alpine village in ruins. The very wind which it produces in falling levels trees and houses to the ground. The tourist crossing the Wengern Alp sees enormous masses of snow melted by the warm rock continually rushing down the precipices of the Jungfrau with a noise like that of a hundred pieces of artillery; and yet to the eye these avalanches, dwarfed by the distance and by the gigantic

scale of the mountain, look like a puff of smoke, which the passing breeze speedily sweeps away. I have listened often to the indescribable sound of falling snow and ice, unlike any other sound in nature, and I have been reminded impressively of the Psalmist's sublime words, "The voice of the Lord is mighty, it shaketh the cedars of Lebanon;" while the awful silence that succeeded seemed to whisper, "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him." What power is sealed up in the immense masses of snow that lie so perfectly balanced on the upper slopes of the mountains, that the least motion of the air would unloose them! Travellers passing under them must proceed with the utmost care, and not speak above their breath. Innumerable fatal accidents have happened in consequence of the neglect of such precautions, and avalanches thus started have not unfrequently overwhelmed a whole valley! You see the tremendous pressure of the snow as it slowly descends the mountain-side, and becomes gradually consolidated into the ice of the glacier. Though its motion be utterly imperceptible to the naked eye, it presses forward with a constant, steady, and irresistible force, torn and twisted in the narrowest parts into the most fearful chaos of crevasses, blocks, and precipices of ice. It tosses upon its surface as if in sport stupendous blocks of granite, which it transports from the loftiest summits to the lowest valleys; and it wrinkles up the solid earth in front of its advancing wall like a sheet of paper.

3. Let us look further at the service of the snow.

"He giveth snow like wool," says the Psalmist. This comparison expressively indicates one of the most important purposes which the snow serves in the economy of nature. It covers the earth like a blanket during that period of winter sleep which is necessary to recruit its exhausted energies, and prepare it for fresh efforts in spring; and being, like wool, a bad conductor, it conserves the latent heat of the soil, and protects the dormant life of plant and animal hid under it from the frosty rigour of the outside air. Winter-sown wheat, when defended by this covering, whose under surface seldom falls much below 32° Fahr., can thrive even though the temperature of the air above may be many degrees below the freezing-point. Our country, enjoying an equable climate, seldom requires this protection; but in northern climates, where the winter is severe and prolonged, its beneficial effects are most marked. The scanty vegetation which blooms with such sudden and marvellous loveliness in the height of summer, in the Arctic regions and on mountain summits, would perish utterly were it not for the protection of the snow that lies on it for three-quarters of the year. In a shady hollow of the precipitous rocks which crown the summit of the Morgenberg range, lying to the east of Interlachen, I once saw one of the most striking examples of the good offices of the snow. A huge wreath, the legacy of the previous winter, was melting slowly beneath the hot breath of July, and from one end of it flowed a rill of the clearest and coldest water, inexpressibly refreshing in the parching heat. Around it bloomed

a perfect garden of Alpine plants; rich patches of gentian of every shade and size, forget-me-nots blue as their native skies, pure white ranunculuses, yellow geums dazzling the eye by their brightness and profusion, mountain cowslips, and crimson flames of rhododendron bushes casting a glowing reflection upon the cold barren surface of the snow. Wherever the wreath melted, leaving the newly exposed ground black and burnt-looking, crowds of the graceful purple tassels of the soldanella sprang up as if by magic. I never saw such a wonderful display of floral beauty, and all fostered by what is usually associated with death and desolation; summer reposing in all her charms on the chill bosom of winter. In the course of a few weeks the snow wreath would disappear, and the bright garden which it cherished would vanish with it, leaving behind a dry and lifeless waste. Thus the snow stood the friend of the fair Alpine flowers against the too ardent advances of the sun; or rather, the sun and the snow, forgetting their antagonism, worked together for the good of these children of the light. That wreath with its surrounding garden was surely an emblem of human life, played upon by opposite forces made to harmonise in its well-being, melting away continually, and in its melting creating many fair and happy things, which in the end perish with it!

But it is not to Alpine plants and hybernating animals alone that God gives snow like wool. The Esquimaux take advantage of its curious protective property, and ingeniously build their winter huts of blocks of hardened

snow; thus strangely enough, by a homœopathic law, protecting themselves against cold by the effects of cold. The Arctic navigator has been often indebted to walls of snow banked up round his ship for the comparative comfort of his winter quarters, when the temperature without has fallen so low that even chloric ether became solid. And many a precious life has been saved by the timely shelter which the snow-storm itself has provided against its own violence. But while snow thus warms in cold regions, it also cools in warm regions. It sends down from the white summits of equatorial mountains its cool breath to revive and brace the drooping life of lands sweltering under a tropic sun; and from its lofty inexhaustible reservoirs it feeds perennial rivers that water the plains when all the wells and streams are white and silent in the baking heat. Without the perpetual snow of mountain regions the earth would be reduced to a lifeless desert. How wonderful is that ceaseless process by which the vapour that ascends from the ocean falls upon the high range far inland in the form of snow, and descends the mountain-side in the glacier by the slowest and safest of all modes of motion, melting at its extremity into a river—flowing back to the ocean, enlarged by the heat of summer when the need is greatest, and imparting freshness and fertility to a wide tract of country that would otherwise be hopelessly barren! There is no more striking proof of a Higher Intelligence combining the forces of nature with a beneficent end in view!

And not only does the perpetual Alpine snow thus

keep always full the rivers that water the plains, but, by its grinding force as it presses down the mountains, it removes particles from the rocks, which are carried off by the rivers and spread over the plains. Such is the origin of a large part of the level land of Europe. It has been formed out of the ruins of the mountains by the action of snow. It was by the snow of far-off ages that our valleys and lake-basins were scooped out, the forms of our landscapes sculptured and moulded, and the soil formed in which we grow our harvests. Who would think of such a connection? And yet it is true! Just as each season we owe the bloom and brightness of our summer fields to the gloom and blight of winter, so do we owe the present summer beauty of the world to the great secular winter of the glacial period. And does not God bring about results as striking by agencies apparently as contradictory in the human world? He who warms the tender latent life of the flowers by the snow, and moulds the quiet beauty of the summer landscape by the desolating glacier, makes the cold of adversity to cherish the life of the soul, and to round into spiritual loveliness the harshness and roughness of a carnal, selfish nature. Many a profitable Christian life owes its fairness and fruitfulness to causes which wrecked and wasted it for a time. God giveth snow like wool; and chill and blighting as is the touch of sorrow, it has a protective influence which guards against greater evils; it sculptures the spiritual landscape within into forms of beauty and grace, and deepens and fertilises

the soil of the heart so that in it may grow from God's own planting the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

4. And now, in the end, let us look at the Giver of the snow. "He *giveth* snow like wool." "The snow-flake," as Professor Tyndall strikingly says, "leads back to the sun"—so intimately related are all things to each other in this wonderful universe. It leads farther and higher still—even to Him who is our sun and shield, the light and heat of all creation. The whole vast realm of winter, with its strange phenomena, is but the breath of God—the Creative Word—as it were congealed against the blue transparency of space, like the marvellous frost-work on a window-pane. The Psalmist had not the shadow of a doubt that God formed and sent the annual miracle of snow, as He had formed and sent the daily miracle of manna in the desert. It was a common-place thing; it was a natural, ordinary occurrence; but it had the Divine sign upon it, and it showed forth the glory and goodness of God as strikingly as the most wonderful supernatural event in his nation's history. When God would impress Job with a sense of His power, it was not to some of His miraculous, but to some of His ordinary works that He appealed. And when the Psalmist would praise God for the preservation of Israel and the restoration of Jerusalem—as he does in the Psalm from which my subject is taken—it is not to the wonderful miraculous events with which the history of Israel abounded that He directs attention, but to the common events of Providence and the ordinary appearances and processes

of nature. He cannot think enough of the Omnipotent Creator and Ruler of the Universe entering into familiar relations with His people, and condescending to their humblest wants. It is the same God that giveth snow like wool who shows His word unto Jacob, and His statutes and ordinances unto Israel. And the wonder of the familiarity is enhanced by thoughts borrowed from the wonders of nature. We know a thousand times more of the nature, formation, and purpose of the snow than the Psalmist did. But that knowledge is dearly earned if our science destroys our faith. What amount or precision of scientific knowledge can compensate us for the loss of the spiritual susceptibility, which in all the wonders and beauties of Creation brings us into personal contact with an infinitely wise mind and an infinitely loving heart? The aurora gleams of science in the long chill night of our Arctic winter will not cheer and quicken us, if the sun of faith, which is the real heat of our life, rise not above our horizon. This world, in which the Psalmist saw God and traced the operation of His hand, appeals not to the intellect only, but also to the spirit; and if with our intellect we examine the marvellous structure of the snow and the laws which build up its exquisite crystals, we are made morally purer and happier if with our souls and all that is within us we worship the God who made both us and it.

While the snow warms and preserves the life of nature, it, alas! brings poverty and discomfort into many a human life and home. But it can warm the

charity of Christian hearts to whom God has given abundance. He who giveth the snow to sadden and embitter the life of one, has given to another the wealth by which that privation may be removed. And as the traveller, who is in danger of being overcome by the fatal sleep in the snow-storm, preserves his own vitality and strength by his efforts to restore the companion who is more exhausted than himself; so the Christian, by his endeavours to make more comfortable the unhappy lot of his poorer friends, will preserve and invigorate his own spiritual life, and make it glow with warmth and beauty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PERMANENCE OF THE PAST.

"God requireth that which is past."—ECCLESIASTES iii. 15.

IN God's great universe there is no absolute past. Time and space are the same. They have no true reality, but are mere modes of contemplation—conditions by which objects are rendered perceptible to us. Owing to the time that light, our only medium of vision, takes to traverse the vast spaces between the stars and our earth, we see these stars not as they are, but as they were when the ray of light was emitted, several minutes, or hours, or centuries ago. There are stars so remote that the light by which we see them must have left them before the creation of man. Could we reverse our view-point, and place ourselves at the precise distance which a ray of light would take the long interval of ages to travel, and could we possess the necessary optical power, we should be able to look down upon the earth, and see the mastodon, which is now only a fossil in our cabinets, browsing among the quaint vegetation of the

tertiary epoch. By graduating the distance between our point of observation in some star and our earth—by making the interval of time to coincide with the interval of space which a ray of light can shoot across—it would be possible for us to see all the past cosmical eras passing before us in panoramic view. Thus the visible record of much that happened on our earth is still travelling by means of light through the regions of space; as the stars recede, so time recedes with them, and an actual and true representation of any past event may be seen in some star. We may be looking unconsciously any night at some orb in the sky from which—if we could transport ourselves thither, and were we endowed with the necessary optical power—we should be able to see our Saviour walking upon the Sea of Galilee, hanging upon the cross, or ascending to heaven from the Mount of Olives. And passing as swiftly as a ray of light from a star of the twelfth magnitude to our sun, the whole history of the world, from the time of Abraham to the present day, would pass in review before our eye in the space of a single hour. By such sensible and actual suppositions the omniscience of God may be conceived of by us as a material all-comprehensive view. Before Him, endowed with the powers which we lack, the whole history of the universe appears immediately and at once. The extension of time and the extension of space cannot be distinguished from one another. The relations of past and future disappear; they form one magnificent whole. He fills at once the boundless infinitude of His being. He is the Alpha at the same

time that He is the Omega. With Him beginning and ending coalesce and inclose everything intermediate.

1. *God requireth the past throughout the universe.*— What are our sciences but memories of the past. Astronomy is the memory of the universe; geology is the memory of the earth; history is the memory of the human race. There is nothing forgotten or left behind. The past is brought forward into the present, and out of the past the future grows. Each material form bears in itself the record of its past history; each ray of light carries the picture of that from which it has come. Owing to the wonderful improvement that has taken place in the construction and study of the spectroscope, we are learning more and more to read the secrets, not only of the present, but also of the past history of the stars. The astronomer can not only calculate their future movements, but also recall their former phenomena. When we look up to the heavens on a clear, frosty night, we behold many of the stars that glitter faintly in the sky as they were before the race of man was created; nay, we are now gazing upon stars that ages ago were extinguished; and the light by which we see them is only the glare of their funeral pyre shooting across the vast distance that separates us. And surely there is something awful in the thought that on the cold, impassive face of the midnight heavens we behold thus the record of the past eternity unrolled, to be read in time. Then what a faithful testimony has our own earth kept of the changes through which it has passed! The geologist, from the unmistakable signs which he

sees in the rocks, can reconstruct in imagination the seas and shores that vanished untold ages ago. In the coal-beds we have a vision of the primeval forests of the earth; in the dolomite peaks we behold the coral reefs that once formed a grand circle of breakers in the midst of the ocean; by the help of the polished and striated rocks and the moraine heaps in upland glens, we can recall the old glaciers that sculptured our landscapes, and formed the fertile soil of our meadows and cornfields. In our quarries the tracks of extinct birds and tortoises that walked the sandy beach in a remote era of the world's history, may be seen as distinct as the footprints of the passing animal upon the recent snow. Nay, the rocks retain memorials of former times more accidental and shadowy than even these; such as ripple-marks of ancient seas, produced by the gentle agitation of shallow water over sand or mud, fossil raindrops, little circular and oval hollows with their casts, impressions produced by rain and hail, indicating by their varying appearances the character of the shower and the direction of the wind that prevailed when it had fallen. There is not a tree in our woods but shows in various parts of its structure its past history. From the character of the rings in a transverse section of its trunk may be accurately deciphered the peculiarities of every summer and winter that have passed over it. From the scars on the outside of the branches and twigs we can not only tell the age of these shoots, but also the number of leaves which they produced, and the amount of growth which they

made each year, the character of the weather to which they were exposed, and the nature of the circumstances in which they were placed—in short, we have displayed before our eyes in a moment their exact history during their whole past life. The fossil tree, petrified into a hard stone and dug up from beneath hundreds of feet of solid rock, preserves the most delicate of these natural hieroglyphics uninjured. Place a thin, transparent slice of the fossil wood under the microscope, and it not only shows at once that it formed part of a species of extinct palm or pine-tree, but it also reveals the kind of weather which prevailed when it was green and flourishing thousands of ages ago, the transient sunshine, and the passing shower and the wayward wind of long-forgotten summers. Memory is not a faculty peculiar to mind; it exists in each nerve-centre, whether of sensation or motion, as is proved by the fact that each nerve-centre can be educated to respond to impressions. It is a property of every tissue of the body. The scar of a wound is the recollection by the tissue of the injury which it has received; and the marks of the small-pox are an evidence that the whole system remembers the attack of the disease. There is such a thing too as ancestral memory; and the hereditary traits and peculiarities which successive generations exhibit testify to its permanence. Many of the strange instincts, mysterious associations, and shadowy recollections for whose origin in our own experience we cannot account, and which Wordsworth in his famous "Ode" alludes to as intimations of a divine home recently left,

may be traces in us of the memory of our forefathers which we have inherited. What are the phenomena of rejuvenescence in plants but a *reminding*—a grasping anew amid the old withered decaying forms of life of the ideal or type—a going back to the first fair condition. The old specific nature returns to life with each young annual plant, and every fresh shoot on a perennial plant. Every new growth on a tree in spring is only a repetition of the original form and vital purpose. The reproduction of long over-passed forms, the striking back of varieties, and the recurrence of hybrids into the mother-species, are all familiar illustrations of the persistency of memory in the organic world. Nature never forgets. No thing perishes without leaving a record of it behind. The past history of the universe is not only preserved in the memory of God, but is also inscribed upon its own tablets.

2. *God requireth the past for our present consolation.*—He takes up all we have left behind in the plenitude of His existence. The friends who have gone from us live in Him; the days that are no more are revived in Him. He is intimately acquainted, not only with our present thoughts, but also with the whole of our past experience. In communion with Him we can live over again our former lives; and thus we are saved from the unutterable loneliness of bereavement and old age, when those who were the associates of our joys and sorrows, and the depositaries of the recollections of early scenes and incidents, have left us for ever. The images of the past that haunt our own minds are ineffaceably impressed upon His also.

The friends whose loss we mourn, all that they were in themselves, and all that they were to us, are known with the most minute and perfect knowledge to Him. The bright and happy days of childhood and youth have not vanished; they are preserved in the vivid consciousness of Him who gave them all their charm. Our seasons of gloom and care are not forgotten like clouds that years ago darkened the sky, but have their witness still in the sympathetic heart of Him who in all our afflictions is afflicted. The successive periods of our existence, like lights and shadows on a sunny hill, have not perished in the using; their fleeting moments and impressions have been laid up for ever in the storehouse of the Infinite Mind. We are not left to wander alone over the ruins of the past; alone in the crowd, because none of our fellow-creatures can revisit with us the scenes that were so dear, or recall with us the joys and sorrows that were so tender and sad. He is with us who keeps, independently of our own frail memories, a faithful record of the whole course of our pilgrimage; who can summon back not only the outward circumstances and objects of days long since departed, but also the inmost thoughts and feelings with which they were associated, and who remembers what we ourselves have forgotten. In converse with Him, in whom thus all our life is hid, upon whose mind the whole picture of our existence is mirrored, we feel that, though lonely, we are not alone —though the perishing creatures of a day, we are living even now in eternity.

3. *God requireth the past for its restoration.*—As the context indicates, it is a law of the divine manifestation, a mode of the divine working in every department, that the past should be brought forward into the present, the old reproduced in the new. In nature and religion the progressive and the conservative elements are combined. Each new stratum of rock is formed out of the ruin of the previous strata. The properties of the lower organisms are carried up into the higher, and there made to serve nobler purposes; the same vital forces which produce the plant being brought forward into the animal, and there subordinated to the senses and the power of locomotion; while the endowments of the animal are in their turn raised up into man, where they lie under the new and crowning authority of reason. In man himself the characteristics of each age are carried along with him through every advancing stage of life, and the child-heart may be retained in extreme old age. In the history of nations the past overshadows and forms the present, and the modifications which existing institutions undergo are based upon the solid advantages of old institutions; while "freedom broadens slowly down from precedent to precedent." The revival of letters in Europe was caused by the reproduction of the ancient literature of Greece and Rome. In like manner in Scripture every advancing event is marked by new powers and destined for higher ends; but with these are always essentially recapitulated all things that have been previously employed. The system of truth contained

in the successive dispensations of religion is one and the same. All the elements of religious worship that belonged to the patriarchal system were incorporated with the succeeding economy. And is not the Christian religion the heir of the Jewish? Is not every name —every feeling, every institution that existed under the old covenant, still continued under the new, only invested with a higher meaning? Every characteristic of the one finds its counterpart, its corresponding reality in the other. The shadow of the Law becomes the substance of the Gospel. The last chapters of the Book of Revelation form a mosaic, gathering up all the separate revelations of the previous books into one significant picture, completing the design of Scripture, and declaring its marvellous unity. And all the cardinal facts and chief doctrines of revelation are but majestic instances of that same kind of continuity of the divine plan in the moral and spiritual world which we have been taught to observe in the universe of matter—a plan ordained of old by the Eternal Father. "Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; that which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath been already."

God, in His house not made with hands, is not doing as we do when our household goods are old and worn out and we replace them by things altogether new. He is not continually refurnishing the earth. He is causing the same flowers and trees and streams to appear season after season. He never wearies of repeating the old familiar things. He keeps age after

age, generation after generation, year after year, the same old home-feeling in His earth for us. And is not this a strong argument that He will keep the old home-feeling for us in heaven; that we shall find ourselves beyond the river of death in the midst of all the former familiar things of our life, just as when we get out of the winter gloom and desolation of any year, we find ourselves in the midst of all that made the former springs and summers so sweet and precious to us? Why has God created in us such an intense love of the past, such an ardent longing for its restoration? Why does the dullest moment become sacred, and the most commonplace experience beautiful, when it recedes into the past, and can only be seen in the sunset glow of memory? Why is the recalling of days that are no more, sweet as sacramental wine to dying lips—"deep as first love, and wild with all regret"? Why do the aged, amid the decays of nature, when this life is fading from their view, and the other is opening before them, live more in the past than in the present or future, and remember the things that happened to them in early childhood more vividly than what took place only a few hours ago? Does not the whole analogy of things, the whole system of mutual adaptation seen throughout nature, whereby there are no means without an end, no appetites or desires without a corresponding provision, declare that this powerful instinct of our hearts will be gratified, that the past, with all its precious possessions and tender experiences, will be restored to us? If here we ascend a green

hill, and find the flowers blooming anew on its summit which faded weeks ago at its foot—altitude thus corresponding with the seasons of the year; if on a journey here we gain some elevated point and see the whole course of the long white road which we had measured out in gradual succession—one part disappearing as another came into view—spread out at once; is not this a sign to us that on the hill of God we shall recover all that we loved and lost on earth, and see the whole path of life which we had traversed unrolled in all its length before us? It is no Lethe that flows out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb, but the clear river of eternal life which includes in its ample tide all our past as well as all our present and future. Here memory is of the brain, while the heart remembers not. If the old feeling has vanished, the heart cannot recall it. That is a joy which the brain renews but the heart cannot. We can remember what we felt of old, but we cannot feel what we remember. It is this that constitutes the true sadness in all the changes of life; that makes us feel strange in a once familiar scene. It was a merciful severity that drove man out of Eden when his innocent happiness fled. It would have been a tantalising misery to dwell in the midst of objects that could no longer awaken in the heart the old response. And we may well wish never to see again any Eden of our bliss, if we cannot feel in it as we once did. But in the paradise above the heart will remember as well as the head. With the restoration of the old loves—and the old sunny scenes

—will be revived in all their freshness and tenderness the feelings connected with them. I love to think of heaven as *a recollection*, and to believe that the kingdom of God in its highest sense is the restitution of all things. The last words of God's blessed Book, the last words heard from the lips of the risen and glorified Redeemer by human ear, assure me that all that Adam lost will be restored by Christ. The blessings which brightened man's early pathway will be reproduced, and he will enter again on his once forfeited inheritance. Wasted, toiling humanity, after the great *circumnavigation* of human history is over, will return to its early purity and glory. The tree of life will bloom again, and the river of life will flow through the paradise regained. The New Jerusalem will descend from God out of heaven, "not in the unearthly splendours of an unknown apocalypse, but as a lark descends from the skies to the nest she had dwelt and loved in."

4. But closely connected with the brightness of such thoughts as these is the shadow of the solemn one that *God requireth the past for judgment.* I have said that the stars of heaven witness and retain the scenes and events of our earth. The pictures of all secret deeds that have ever been done really and actually exist, glancing by the vibration of light farther and farther in the universe. At this moment is seen in one of the stars, the gleam of the swords with which the babes of Bethlehem were murdered. The massacre is registered in characters of light on the face of heaven.

We are continually endowing the inanimate earth with our own consciousness, impressing our own moral history upon the objects around us; and these objects react upon us in recalling that history. They keep a silent record of what we have been and done in the associations connected with them; and that record they unfold for us to read when at any time we come into contact with them. The sky and the earth are thus books of remembrance that witness against us, and God will open them on the great day. "He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth beneath, that He may judge His people." In ourselves, too, there are indelible records of our former history. The whole past of our lives is with us in the present, and accompanies us into the future; and whatever we have done or suffered or been has entered into our deeper being, and we have only to go there to find it. Memory is indestructible. The successive layers of our thoughts and feelings, as De Quincey has strikingly shown, may seem to be obliterated, like the different handwritings in an ancient palimpsest, but the touch of a fever, a moment of peril or excitement, the decay of old age, or the unexpected association of some outward object, will revive them in a moment in all their former vividness. Deepen the daylight a little, bring over it the filmy veil of early twilight. and the stars hidden in the profound blue of the sky come out one by one; and so, increase the sensibility of memory in the smallest degree, and things long lost and forgotten in its depths reappear with magic power. There are numerous authentic instances of

individuals on the verge of drowning, who had their whole life placed before them in a kind of panoramic review, not only the leading matters but even the smallest details, and each act accompanied by the consciousness of its moral character, and by reflections on its causes and consequences. We have in this a faint indication of the almost infinite power of memory with which we are to awaken hereafter. And the book of memory is one of the books that shall be opened in the Judgment Day, and from which we shall be judged. We all carry with us, from the cradle to the grave, this record of our lives; and what is written in it is written and cannot be altered. It may be sealed with seven seals, like the book which St. John saw in vision, and no man, either in heaven or in earth, or under the earth, may be able to open it or to look therein; but at the word of the Almighty its seals will be loosed, and all its pages unfolded, and every statement and deposition contained therein be fully revealed to the light, and we ourselves shall be able to read in its pages things we had long forgotten, things we had thought for ever perished. It is an awful thought that the indictment of the impenitent sinner at the bar of divine justice has thus been carried about with him, unconsciously, all his life in his own bosom—that he himself is the strongest witness against himself. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked and slothful servant."

We cannot undo the past and begin afresh. We have to take the past as the starting-point and determining

element of the future. We are what the past has made us; and the memory of former things is indelible. But the Gospel reminds us that what cannot be obliterated may be transmuted by divine grace. In Christ Jesus we may become new creatures; and in the eternal life that we begin, in union with Him, all old things, so far as there is any condemning power in them, pass away, and all things in the transfiguring light of heavenly love become new. Let not the memory of the past, therefore, cling like a millstone about our neck, or like a fetter about our feet. Let us get out of all the pains, defects, and humiliations of the past the lessons of heavenly wisdom which they were meant to teach; and in conformity with the proneness of the mind to form new resolutions at marked or memorable eras, let us take advantage of every anniversary, birthday, or commencement of a new year to reckon ourselves, in regard to the whole past of our lives, to be dead indeed unto sin, but in regard to the present and future, alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DAYS OF A TREE.

"As the days of a tree are the days of my people."
—ISAIAH lxv. 22.

OF all natural objects trees have the closest fellowship with man. When growing together in dense primeval forests they indeed exclude his presence, and the gloom and solitude produce an awe as of the supernatural world. But in the open cultivated spaces around his home they become domesticated, and are regarded with a sentiment akin to affection. They help to make a leafy nest for him out of the bare, exposed wilderness, into which the winds come deprived of all their bitterness, and the fierce sunshine is filtered through the foliage into a cool refreshing light. God first talked with man under their shadow; man's first worship was helped if not inspired by the solemn sights and sounds of the grove, the flitting lights and shades as of mysterious shapes and the whispered secrets of the leaves; and the pillared aisles and groined interlacing of branches first suggested to him the ideas of

architectural beauty which grew into permanent shape in the house of prayer. The heart twines around them some of its most fragrant memories; and at the end of every vista of the vanished years—we see through the golden light a favourite tree associated with some cherished incident of the past. Trees are often planted as memorials of visits to celebrated scenes, or at the birth of an heir to an estate. Near Constantinople the Turks have a beautiful custom. Whenever a child is born the parents plant a cypress in the churchyard; and when either of the parents dies another tree is planted by the surviving children at the head of the grave. To watch the green spire of such a birthday tree growing taller and casting a longer shadow upon the ground, like the gnomon of a natural dial, indicating the flight of time, might teach an impressive moral even to the most careless observer. The years pass over the tree as they pass over its human rival in the race of life; but while the one grows greener and more massive, a pillar of cloud against the glare of noon, and of fire in the slanting sunset, the other, after the blossom and vigour of manhood are over, begins to show the grey hairs and the infirmities of age, and at last, when the old man sinks into the grave at the foot of the still fresh and flourishing tree, his children plant beside it another cypress, destined to outlive its predecessor, and to triumph in its turn over death and decay.

These human associations give to the emblem of the prophet a touching significance. It is a very

appropriate emblem. The comparison between the two kinds of life is very close. In every particular connected with organic existence, in the laws of their development, decay and reproduction, trees and human beings are complete counterparts of one another. The former expresses the ideas suggested by the latter, only on a lower platform, as befits a humbler sphere of being. Cuvier's well-known maxim, "An origin by generation, a growth by nutrition, and a termination by death," applies equally to both. Even their structure to a certain extent is similar. The leaves correspond to the lungs and digestive organs; the blossoms represent the distinctions of sex; and the names of trunk, arms, and limbs are given indiscriminately to similar parts of both organisms. But if we inquire what a tree really is, we shall find in the emblem a correspondence still more profound. A tree is generally supposed to be a single individual, in the same sense that a man is an individual. It is one organism from the seed to the whole mass of vegetable matter, trunk, branches, twigs and foliage, that has gathered round and extended the sapling that springs from it. It passes through a period of youth, maturity, and old age. It has a fixed limit of size and age, varying somewhat with the species, beyond which even in the most favourable circumstances it cannot go. Independently of those causes which tend prematurely to shorten its life, each tree has in itself the conditions which insure its dissolution within a given time. It gradually loses its vital properties, and ceases to perform its vital functions; its tissues become harder and

more rigid ; and at last the tree exhibits, outwardly and inwardly, changes which constitute and indicate a state which may well be called old age, a state which is inevitably induced by the prolonged exercise of its own vitality, and is indicative of the approach of death. Its size on the same principle is not determined by circumstances, but by a fixed standard to which it grows and from which it cannot greatly deviate.

But this popular view is altogether erroneous. A tree is not a single individual, a unity in which there is but one of each kind of organ, or of each set of organs, and in which the vital parts are so mutually related and dependent upon each other, that the removal of one would occasion the death of the whole structure. On the contrary, it is an aggregate of separate, independent individuals, a composite organism in which there is no centralisation of life, and all the parts are frequently repeated : there being as many lungs as there are leaves, and as many organs of reproduction as there are blossoms. Each shoot is a distinct plant performing the functions of nutrition and propagation by and for itself, but, by virtue of its organic union with the rest of the tree, contributing to the general welfare, and helping to build up the common fabric. Cut off—its removal would not virtually injure the tree, nor impair its own vitality ; and planted in the soil, it would strike root and in course of time grow to the same size as its parent. A tree may thus be said to be a colony of plants growing vertically instead of horizontally. Could we imagine a strawberry-bed, whose separate

plants are united by runners, gathered together and growing straight up in the air, the runners forming the trunk and branches, and the stems the boughs and twigs, we should have a very good idea of the composition of a tree. Only one generation of plants is living, viz. the shoots which have sprung from the buds of the present year; all the rest of the tree, the trunk, and woody portions, consist of the dead remains of as many generations of plants as the tree is old. Each of the living shoots exactly resembles in conformation and structure, as well as in constitution and vital power, the sapling which proceeded from the seed. Unlike the primitive sapling which grew directly out of the soil, each subsequent shoot grows like a parasite on the organic remains of the previous shoots, which afford it nourishment and mechanical support. It lives only one year, and attains its full growth of a few inches in summer, passing into the sere and yellow leaf, and eventually dying in autumn, making provision, in the form of a bud that tips its summit, for the production of a similar shoot in the following spring. While the foliage and other evanescent parts of it disappear, the woody stem and roots remain, and these go to increase the bulk of the tree, and, hermetically sealed within its structure, are preserved from the process of decay to which all dead organic substances exposed to the weather are liable.

Regarding a tree then as a body corporate, consisting of an aggregate of living and dead plants, the dead enclosed and preserved in the tissues of the living,

and the living continually reproducing and grafting themselves upon one another, it follows necessarily that there is no physical limit to the size it may attain, or to the age it may reach. From its very nature a tree is immortal. It may go on growing and enlarging for ages, and after thousands of years be still in the full vigour of its existence. Even in Europe where man has so long held sway, and has ever been destroying the woods and forests, individual trees have survived since the commencement of the Christian era, and their vigorous hold of life seems to secure them a longevity in comparison with which the period already passed may be no more than their early youth; while in other less known parts of the world trees are to be found whose enormous size would indicate that they reached back to the origin of the existing state of the globe. Such vegetable giants and veterans belong to various natural families; so that the vast longevity and size which they display is not the special property of any one order or species. In our own country there are oaks, limes, sycamores, chestnuts, ashes and other trees of great antiquity and extraordinary size, some of them dating long previous to the Conquest; but they all sink into insignificance before the yews. In a walled enclosure within the churchyard of Fortingal—a picturesque village in the heart of the Perthshire Highlands—is a most remarkable yew, said by De Candolle to be the oldest tree in Europe. He estimated its age at two thousand six hundred or two thousand eight hundred years. Pennant, who saw it during his first tour in

Scotland in 1769, and gave the earliest account of it, found the circumference of its trunk to be fifty-six and a half feet. In his time the central part was decayed down to the ground; and about sixty years later Strutt, in his *Silva Britannica*, represented the trunk in a fine etching, as divided into two hollow shells facing one another, with a funeral in the act of passing through the gap, and sending forth branches which intertwined above and formed one grand leafy head. Since then it has undergone lamentable destruction, not only from the ravages of natural decay, but chiefly from the removal of large arms and even portions of the trunk to make drinking-cups and other curiosities. What now remains of it are three huge wasted shells leaning against the wall of the enclosure, at wide intervals from each other. Blanched and gnarled, they look like the ribs of some gigantic pre-adamite monster —the sole relic of an older geological world. One of the shells is completely dead and of a dingy grey colour, but the wood under the bark is still firm and red, and shows only at the edges the signs of rottenness. The other two support an enormous amount of vigorous vegetation; and the contrast between the hollow decayed-looking shells and the healthy branches clothed with a dense mass of green foliage, bearing a large crop of berries, is exceedingly striking. The soil in the interspace is composed not only of decaying wood, but also of human dust, for graves have repeatedly been dug in the enclosure.

The yew is well-known to be a very slow-growing

tree. Unlike other evergreens which have a brighter smile in the face of spring, its young growth is of the same unyielding tint as its oldest foliage. Its inexorable verdure gives no register of the seasons, and takes no notice of their lapse. Its wood is so hard and smooth that the years deposit but the thinnest circles of it. Centuries pass over it and leave but little trace of their flight either in its size or appearance. Of the age of the Fortingal yew the materials available for making a proper estimate are very unsatisfactory. The fragments that remain are parts of the outermost shell of the old trunk, in which the wave of vitality having travelled so far, is very nearly spent. In sections made here and there in them, the annual rings—which are so very fine and close as not to be counted without the aid of a lens—indicate a rate of growth of one inch in thirty-five, sixty-six, seventy, and in one instance, ninety years. During the last hundred years therefore, or since the visit of Pennant, the tree has undergone little or no appreciable extension. When the trunk was entire the rate of growth was much more rapid. Judging from the evidence of other fresh yews, it would have attained a girth of twenty-two feet in a thousand years; and computing its after growth at an average rate of an inch in thirty-five years, which seems to be the common standard at that age, we are compelled to admit, however startling it may be, that the longevity which tradition assigns to it is within the mark.

Often when a boy—for my native place was not far off—have I climbed over the wall and gazed in wonder

and awe upon this huge relic of the primeval world crumbling away in this remote funereal solitude. My mind could hardly compass the thought that its infant shoots were put forth long before Isaiah wrote the words which stand at the head of this chapter. Who can tell what changes it has seen! In its immediate neighbourhood are many interesting remains of the shadowy past. About four miles to the south there is one of the largest Druidical circles in Scotland; throughout the glen at whose mouth it stands are numerous ruins of the strongholds of the primitive inhabitants; on the plain below by the river side there are distinct traces of a Roman camp which has given its name of the Fort of the Strangers to the village, and where, according to an old persistent tradition, the father of Pontius Pilate was the officer in command; while six miles to the east are still standing two huge stone crosses in the centre of the hamlet of Dull, connected with one of the earliest Celtic monasteries, founded by Adamnan the successor and biographer of St. Columba. This Methuselah of its tribe saw those races and creeds come and go around it; it bridged with its enduring life the gulf of the silent intermediate ages; while in later times generation after generation of the rude forefathers of the village were laid to rest beneath its shadow. We speak of sidereal-time, but such a tree helps us to realise the grandeur of tree-time. The stars in their courses revolve as masses of dead matter, but this is a living creature.

The association of the churchyard and parish church with it may be accounted for by the fact that it had

a religious veneration attached to it from a remote antiquity. Owing to its vast age and size it may have been used as an hypæthral temple consecrated to tree-worship, or whatever form of natural religion the primitive inhabitants favoured. When the first Celtic missionaries from Iona penetrated to this region they found this venerable tree regarded as a sacred object, and its site as a place of religious meeting for the living and of interment for the dead. Upon the principle of utilising all that man had previously regarded as holy, and out of the forms of the false bringing the power of the true, which Christianity has always adopted, instead of drawing away the people from the spot, they planted the cross beside it, and changed it into one of their own open-air sanctuaries, under whose living roof the gospel was preached, until at last a Christian church and churchyard were formed which have continued ever since. Surely such a sainted tree is worthy of all the religious history that has gathered around it! What more suitable religious symbol could be found on earth? To pagan and Christian alike it appealed, and conveyed a lesson common to both religions, common to human nature which is always and everywhere the same. While its dark and gloomy shadow, its poisonous leaves and bitter juice, spoke of death and associated it with the tomb, those who, having no other books must therefore have read the book of nature more studiously, would see in its calm patient endurance age after age, keeping its foliage ever green, the fittest symbol under the stars of immortality. These two images of death and

immortality were seen combined and harmonised in one symbol, teaching the great doctrine of all religions, what every human heart longs for as its most precious hope—an immortality beyond death. If such were the lessons which the "grey fathers" of our country were accustomed to read in it, we need not wonder that the early Christian missionary should have planted his cross beside the same hallowed object under whose shadow the pagan had reared his altar; for the cross set forth, only more clearly and fully, the same great truths which natural religion had seen dimly shadowed forth in the funereal evergreen tree.

From the nature of a tree as a composite, social organism, it also necessarily follows that it is exempt from death by old age. The individual plants whose combination constitutes the corporate body, being only annuals, may be said to die of old age in autumn when the leaves fade and fall. But as regards the whole organism there is no such thing as old age. In this respect it is a little world in itself, renewing its youth every year as the earth renews its vegetation every spring; for the annual crop of shoots covered with leaves, which by their reaction nourish and strengthen the tree, are the equivalents of the successive generations of plants which keep the earth green. We know nothing definite or satisfactory regarding either the natural longevity or the natural size of any one species of tree. The history of most of the trees with which we are familiar gives us no insight into their capacities for life or growth. We know that they can live and

flourish for a certain number of years; but how much longer they could live in more favourable circumstances we cannot tell. The vegetable Nestors, which are the living memorials of an antiquity as great almost as that of the pyramids of Egypt or the sculptures of Nineveh, have not survived all other trees of their species by an exceptional strength of constitution, by an abnormal vitality, as Thomas Parr who died at the age of 152, or Petrarch Zortan who lived to the age of 184, far exceeded the natural age of man. They only show the potential longevity of every tree if placed in equally favourable circumstances. There are no indications that these immemorial trees have reached the limit of their life. They exhibit no signs of what can physiologically be called old age. Many of them are still fresh and vigorous; and though the glory of others may be shorn away, the branches broken off, the trunk hollowed out, and little but a wasted shell left standing, by the aid of a crutch, still that fragment is the seat of as active vital processes as ever; the sap circulates through it as vigorously, it puts forth leaves as fresh and large, it produces flowers and fruit as perfect, and deposits wood as solid and regular as in its earliest years.

The decaying trunks of many trees undergo strange metamorphoses by fresh growths within them. Into the central hollow parts of the yew the growing annual shoots send down their roots, and so gradually fill up the gaps with new wood. In the Fortingal yew a young growth, completely covered with bark and

dense healthy foliage, has sprung up within the blanched shell, which, when the shell has fallen to pieces, will take its place as a vigorous tree, and nothing will remain of the aged parent to tell its history. From the same shell at its base a leafy young branch travels along the ground without rooting anywhere, and fills the whole space with what looks at first sight like a crowded plot of young yew plants. The last time I visited the spot it bore a plentiful crop of berries. Here was a most extraordinary contrast; the gigantic ribs of the old tree, grey with the frost of three thousand years, looking like a vegetable Stonehenge, and that mass of living greenery sprouting from their sides as in their palmiest days! There was no difference between the foliage which that wasted wreck produced, and that of the sapling planted only two or three years ago. And it was a touching thing to see those exquisite crimson berries, that looked as if moulded out of wax or carved out of chalcedony, or the pink inside of an ocean shell, so soft and delicate and juicy, gleaming among the sombre leaves that crowned as with a fadeless garland the hoary trunk standing there and outfacing and defying time. I thought of the radiant little humming-bird, called the flame-bearer, which is found only in the extinct crater of the Andean volcano of Puraci, where all save itself is dead; and had a glimpse of the Love which causes the brightest alpine flowers to appear upon the frozen mountains, and lights up with a spark of beauty the dreariest gloom of nature and humanity. Here was the reality of

the fabled Phœnix; and perhaps this apparent recuperative power may have been another reason why yew-trees are associated with sacred places, suggesting to our pagan forefathers, who—as half-barbarous men always are—must have been close observers of nature, thoughts akin to the scripture doctrine of the resurrection.

All these considerations help us to understand more clearly why a tree should have been chosen as the sacrament or symbol of immortality in Eden, and why it should represent the eternal felicity of the redeemed in the heavenly paradise. The expression "tree of life," acquires a new and deeper significance when we remember that there is nothing else with life that bridges across the centuries, connects departed dynasties and systems of religion with modern governments and fresh creeds, and binds the sympathies of the human heart with the sorrows and joys of other ages dead and gone. When we realise what a tree is—a perennial collection of annual plants, a community of numerous individuals, the individual perishing, but the community surviving, and comprehend the great truth that from the nature of its structure any or every tree might live for ever, endure as long as the world itself, and go on growing and enlarging to any conceivable size—we shall have a more adequate idea of what is implied in the words of the prophet, "As the days of a tree, are the days of my people." How truly applicable are they to the marvellous history of the Jews! As trees are the oldest of living organisms

so the Jews are the oldest of living races. They have existed since the days of their father Abraham until now. Though the least of all people, unable to compete in the arts of life with the nations of antiquity, they have outlived the wisest and most powerful of them. The people that oppressed and led them captive have perished, leaving behind only a few nameless ruins; the kingdoms whose glory overshadowed theirs have vanished, and left not even a wreck behind. But the Jews have still lived on. Like their own cedars of Lebanon they have survived the storms and vicissitudes of ages, and endured while all else has perished around them. In their present state, deprived of their birthright inheritance, without temple, or altar, or sacrifice, a mark to be shot at in every land, they remind one of an aged tree that has long battled with time, yielding only inch by inch to the universal conqueror, and though sorely bruised and battered, still surrounding itself with dignity and picturesqueness, sending up year after year from its scarred and riven trunk fresh foliage and fruit. Although the trunk and main stem of the Jews may be withered away, and only a fragment remain, yet this fragment is as full of life, is as green and flourishing, as in the brightest days of prosperity. And from this fragment will spring up a new and glorious tree that shall overshadow the earth with its branches, and feed the nations with its fruit and heal them with its leaves; and the promise of old shall be fulfilled: "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten; as a teil-tree and as an oak whose substance

is in them when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

I have been particularly struck with the truth of the prophet's words when visiting the Ghetto of Rome. The continuous existence of a small band of Jews in this place, age after age, amid poverty, persecutions, and hostilities of government, society, religion, and nature itself which would undoubtedly have exterminated any other people, is one of the most striking illustrations of the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. Their presence in Rome, as in Egypt and Babylon, has been a conspicuous instance of the visible interposition of a Divine hand, for their own preservation and for their employment in influencing the mightiest movements of history. They were in Rome in the days of the Cæsars as a protest against the idolatry and superstitions of paganism; and they remained in Rome through all the dark ages of the Popes as a protest against the baptised paganism of Christianity. Standing in that filthy street, amid the wreck of God's ancient people, and seeing around me the ruins of the pride and splendour of ancient Rome, the mistress of the world, cast out into the fields like an unburied and dishonoured corpse, and the temporal power of the Pope fallen before the constitutional government of a free and enlightened people, I could not help feeling to the full that a God of righteousness reigns on the earth, and that in the long run, "there is nothing fruitful but sacrifice, nothing lasting but love."

The tree rather than the "everlasting hills" may have

been chosen by the prophet as the symbol of the perpetuity of God's people, not only because it has life, and is therefore a more appropriate emblem of life, not only because of its power of indefinite longevity and increase, but also, as Dr. Harvey has suggested, because it is possessed only of a *contingent* perpetuity. In its own nature a tree is immortal, but it is subject to accidents which impair its vitality and lead to decay and death. Most trees die of mechanical injuries; a storm breaks off a branch and inflicts a wound which exposes the inner heart-wood to the weather, decay takes place, the inside of the trunk becomes hollow, and, incapable of offering resistance, it is hurled to the ground by a fiercer blast of wind than usual. Many trees are placed in unsuitable situations, where they are too much crowded by other trees or too much exposed to the wind, or where the soil does not afford sufficient nourishment to them, and they die of hunger. Their own growth by hardening and compressing their tissues prevents the roots of the young shoots from growing, and the sap from rising freely upwards, and thus they are choked out of life. Add to these causes the manifold destructive influences of nature and the necessities and caprices of men, and it will be at once seen that the great majority of trees must perish ere they have reached their prime, and that even the oldest and largest must finally disappear. This circumstance may have been meant to infuse a salutary warning into the gracious assurance of the text. The days of God's people would be like the days of a tree so long as they obeyed the

laws of truth and righteousness, by which the stability of a nation is maintained; but, like the tree, their days would be cut short prematurely, if they exposed themselves by disobedience to the forces which inevitably bring all that is evil to an end. The cedars which once formed the glory of Lebanon are now so few that a child can count them; and the people who, like those goodly cedars, filled the land and sent out their boughs to the sea and their branches unto the river, have been driven into exile, and are scattered and parted among the nations.

We are profoundly impressed with the transitoriness of human life when we compare it with the longevity of one of the forest patriarchs, that year after year sheds its leaves and still endures. There is nothing in the nature of the tree to limit its life; it grows by additions, and these can go on indefinitely and be conserved in the increasing structure. But man's body lives by substitutions; the particles whose vitality has been exhausted by exercise being continually eliminated and replaced by new ones; and a period soon comes in which the forces of repair can no longer keep pace with the forces of waste, and the organism inevitably perishes. The tree looks so solid and immovable, and our life is so frail and transient. We long for an existence as secure and permanent as that of the cedar or the yew. We feel that we could accomplish so much of what lies near to our heart were our days more like the days of a tree. And yet there is a sense in which our wish can be granted. In nature an annual

plant can be made perennial simply by preventing it from flowering and seeding, when it will develop buds instead, and from thence spring up the following year, continuing to live indefinitely if treated in the same manner. And so in the human world, by sacrificing what seems life but is actual death, we gain what is a seeming death, but is actual life; we lose our selfish individuality and gain a wonderful opulence of being, and feel as if dwelling in eternity, in harmony with the soul of the universe. Annual plants too, if growing separately in the soil, perish; but if they form part of a composite organism they secure a permanence which is not theirs by nature. They die, but they never lose their connection with the tree to which they belong; they share in its immortal life; their remains are sealed up in its structure, and the whole tree is built upon their foundation, is made up of the living and the dead, united by the wonderful bonds of a persistent vitality. And so joined to Christ who only hath life, grafted in Him who is the true vine, our frail perishing life is made immortal, we become members of His body, parts of the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, time and eternity, heaven and earth. We die, but our real life is still hid with Christ in God; we are asleep in Jesus, bound up in the bundle of life, with all the former generations who have died in the Lord; and neither life nor death can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Christ we are possessors of a life whose durability as far transcends the longevity of the oldest tree, as that tree transcends

the existence of the mere infant of a day. Living and believing in Him we shall never die. Death is a mere incident in our everlasting life, the mere fixing upon our affections and hopes the seal of eternity.

There is no reason for the *living* endurance of the individual plants that compose the social organism of the tree. They have accomplished their purpose when they have helped to purify the air and form the fruit, and have deposited an additional layer of wood for man's use; and though they remain in the tree they are really dead, and will never more be the seat of any vital action or change. The tree lives by relays of annual shoots, and these relays in their turn die and never live again. And all this is in conformity with the object for which they exist. They are evanescent structures because their purpose is to minister to passing necessities. But man is an immortal being—for whose sake the whole world itself exists. He has an immortal purpose to fulfil, and therefore although the individuals of the great genealogical tree of the human family die one after another, and although in these individuals themselves a continual process of interstitial death takes place during life, yet there is an ineffaceable distinction between their death and that of the annual shoots of a tree. Through all the changes of life, through the dissolution of death itself, God, who made them in His own image, upholds their distinct personality, and His eternity is the measure of their endless life. Even their bodies are immortal realities. As transcripts of their immortal spirits, our Christian faith

bids us look forward to a resurrection of them, when this corruption shall put on incorruption, and they shall not only never die but shall be rendered incapable of death. They shall preserve in worlds of glory throughout eternity, the identifiable personality they possessed before death. Human life shall know no break from its first dim dawning in this world to its ultimate perfection in the world to come. This continuity of bodily existence confers upon man an awful indestructibility, at the thought of which the enduringness of the oldest trees, ay, even of suns and stars, becomes as nothing.

In the annual plant there is only a single presentation of the essential characteristics of vegetable life. The root, stem, foliage, flower, fruit and seed appear only once; but in the tree there is a continual repetition of the like from year to year and from age to age. And the reason of this is that vegetable life may rise from the narrower circle of the development of the single individual to its wider and grander social destination. With every new generation it grasps anew its typical ideal and carries it over every one-sidedness or imperfection to greater completeness, until at last the magnificent oak or pine in the utmost size, complexity, and luxuriance of which it is capable, displays what vegetable life may become. We have seen how this grander development is related to the greater usefulness of the organism. The single annual plant produces but a comparatively small effect upon nature and is of comparatively little use to man. But the composite tree stores up timber for the

manifold purposes of human economy, and regulates the climate and the distribution of the winds and waters. And so it is with man. Instead of inflicting the threatened penalty of death upon our first parents after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, and so exterminating the human race when there was only a single pair, God ordained that mankind should be perpetuated from age to age indefinitely. In the very sentence of doom there is provision made for the continuation of the species; and thus, instead of a single presentation of husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, there are continual repetitions of these, forming one grand genealogical tree, that shall endure as long as the world lasts. And surely there must be an adequate reason for this continuous repetition of life — a reason as satisfactory in the case of man as in that of the tree. There must be some glorious end which will compensate for the pains of birth, the sorrows of death, and all the sins and miseries which are inherited and perpetuated in the ever-recurring generations of men. We see how the plant repeats itself in stem and foliage in unbroken succession; no leaf, even when belonging to the same formation, exactly resembling another, and with every successive leaf approaching nearer the production of the flower, until at last comes the miracle of blossoming, and the glory of the perfect rose or lily shows the climax towards which the plant was reaching forth. And is there not a climax of blessing, exceeding that of Adam in Eden, exceeding that of the angels in heaven, in store for the human race, towards which each new

generation with similar and yet slightly different experiences is advancing nearer and nearer? With each new birth humanity rejuvenises itself, gets rid of some old evil and develops some latent good. Each father hopes that his child will achieve what he himself had failed to do, and lead a nobler and happier existence. And to this progress the very shortness of life lends the most important aid; for as each generation reaches a point where its development stops and becomes stereotyped, a new generation with fresh and plastic minds comes forward, takes up and carries on the work a few steps further, and becomes fixed in its turn. During endless ages creation struggled on through its entire graduated series of living things to the attainment of the human form, which emerged as by a supreme effort on the last and highest stage, and now stands visibly at the head of the whole, not as a figure carved in *alto relievo* on the bosom of nature, but as a statue standing upon it as a pedestal. Transferring the development from the physical to the spiritual have we not the assurance that there will be a similar progress through all the groanings and travailings together of the successive generations to the glorious consummation of humanity, when the prophecy of the Divine image and likeness in which we were created shall be fulfilled, and the universe shall comprehend what God meant by man? In the tree of life which is in the midst of the heavenly paradise — symbol of the perfection of the whole redeemed community, of all the races and generations of men — will be seen the highest realisation of

the words, "As the days of a tree are the days of my people."

These two time-measurers, the tree and the covenant people, remind me of two other interesting time-measurers. the one by shadow, the other by light, which produced a deep impression upon my mind, and which I may here use as an instructive analogy. In an old-fashioned garden which my young days haunted there is a venerable sun-dial, spotted with mosses and lichens, with homely sweet-scented flowers growing around its pedestal, and gnarled apple-trees dropping upon it in September their faded leaves, and in May their beautiful blossoms, combining the whiteness of the winter snow and the redness of the summer fire, linking the two seasons together into this perfect one. Around its edge is carved the motto, "*Horas non numero nisi serenas.*" In the church of Sta. Maria degli Angeli in Rome, constructed out of the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian by Michael Angelo, there is a remarkable meridian line laid down on the polished floor of inlaid marble. Standing in the garden beside the sundial one sees with dazzled eyes the shadow of the gnomon on a ground of sunshine. Standing in the transept of the church one sees with cool eyes a beam of sunshine on a ground of shadow; for precisely at noon a bright ray comes through a small round hole in the roof made for the purpose and falls upon a particular line on the graduated pavement. The sundial is associated with the works of God, with the flowers and trees, which are constantly renewed and bloom as fresh and fair after thousands of

years as at the first. The flight of time passes over the face of nature there as the shadow passes over the dial and leaves no trace behind. The meridian line of the church is associated with the ruins of human works and the decadence of human glory. The sundial casts its shadow in connection with objects that have no other darkness, to which decay and death are but mere stages of progress; the meridian line gives its light in connection with objects that witness to human sin and sorrow. In the garden the sundial speaks by a shadow of the days of a tree—the duration of the physical world compared with the short space of man's existence—the completeness of vegetable life and the incompleteness of human life. In the church the meridian line speaks by light of the days of God's people, and raises the thoughts to Him in whom there is no darkness at all, and with whom a thousand years are as one day and one day as a thousand years. In the sanctuary the shadow of the world becomes the light of heaven, and all that is changing and evanescent in our life is redeemed from its vanity by being associated with Him who has given us the assurance in His Word that because He lives we shall live also.

I am writing the closing words of this chapter in a scene of wonderful beauty, at the head of one of our western sea-lochs. Over a line of grand old Scotch firs, whose dark blue-green foliage contrasts strikingly with their warm russet trunks, glowing like the burning-bush in the level sunset-fire, rises far up on the horizon the weird fantastic summit of Ben Arthur, or

the Cobbler. Its weather-worn rocks bear a strange resemblance to a shoemaker working on his bench, and to the gigantic profile of an old woman with a Scotch mutch, called his wife. Lifted high above the world of human beings, these mighty sphinxes of nature claim kindred with the enduring heavens. Long ages before the dim Arthurian legends, which have given the mountain its name—these hoary countenances were sculptured by the slow alternate action of the sunbeam and the storm. Older than the oldest records of vegetable or animal life the changing centuries have passed like shadows over their unchanging faces. They gaze with the same calm indifference at the coming and going on the loch below of the daily steamer with its crowds of fashionable tourists, as they gazed upon the fires which our savage ancestors kindled in the primeval solitude. Can there be a more impressive symbol of the permanency of nature as contrasted with the evanescence of man! And yet, as one has well said regarding a similar object, by a change of position the apparently permanent forms become the most fugitive illusion. If I move away a couple of miles the gigantic features disappear, and only a few rugged rocks, without any significance, remain on the mountain-top. The spectral group owes its weird appearance entirely to the human mind. It is in the eyes of man alone that it is outlined against the eternal blue, and the red winter morning kindles its beacon fire on its brow, and the summer constellations deck it with a starry crown.

It is in his mind alone that it is hoary with forgotten years. The space which it fills, the matter of which it is formed, in the unconscious air, are mere size and weight. It is in his consciousness that they are re-created into mountain grandeur. He alone admires the glorious view, embraces the whole scene, and is conscious of the divine idea which it expresses. And shall not a being who is capable of this outlast it all? If he can change the appearance of the scene according to the angle of his vision, and thus make what seems most enduring in it illusory, shall he not, when he has gone away from earth altogether, live on when the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed?

CHAPTER XX.

WASTE.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."—ST. JOHN vi. 12.

BETWEEN the miraculous provision of manna in the Sinaitic desert, and the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in the wilderness of Capernaum, there is a close resemblance. But in regard to the disposal of the food there is a striking and significant difference. Moses said to the Israelites when the manna came, "Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding some of them left of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank." But Jesus said to the disciples when the multitude were fed, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." To gather up the fragments in the one case was to be guilty of faithlessness and distrust in God's providence; to gather up the fragments in the other was to exercise faith and to guard against despising the common blessings of life, and wasting what could be procured with so little trouble. The

difference in the command arose from the difference in the circumstances. The Israelites, in obedience to the Divine will, were sojourning in a region where they could not help themselves. They were therefore directly dependent upon God; the manna was their daily bread given to them immediately from God's own hand. And any attempt on their part to store up the heavenly provision for an emergency would obviously have been an interference with the Divine plan, a proof of want of confidence in God's providential care. On the other hand, those who got the benefit of the Saviour's miracle had followed Him out of the villages of Galilee beyond the reach of ordinary food. They were in the wilderness only for a short time; and their everyday mode of life was the cultivation of the soil and the earning and procuring of their own bread by the sweat of their face. The miracle was only a sudden putting forth of the Almighty arm from behind the veil of His ordinary providence, to show once for all by a great and lasting sign the divine source of the common blessings of life. And to gather up the fragments of the feast was meant in their case to link the supernatural with the natural, to connect every day's food with God the Giver. The permanent design of the miracle was to uphold the wise order of God's arrangements for the supply of human wants by the ordinary operations of nature, and the common ordinances of human society; and to teach men that in quietness they should work and eat their own bread, and provide by the exercise of

common prudence and economy for their prospective necessities.

Our daily bread is given to us in a manner so regular and lavish that there is a strong tendency to think lightly of its crumbs and fragments. The miracle of the multiplication of our loaves and fishes is so uniform and constant that we are apt to think that there is little need to guard against waste. He who has fed us so fully and uninterruptedly hitherto by the miracle of His providence will always feed us we think in the same manner; therefore there is no necessity for us to be economical in the use of the good things which He provides for us. We have an unfailing supply to draw from, and therefore may be as profuse and careless as we please. Now our Lord guards us against this tendency of the daily miracles of His providence, as much as He guarded the disciples against the same tendency of the special miracle in the wilderness of Capernaum. "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost," He says to us at the close of every feast which He provides for us in the wilderness of this world. And assuredly no lesson is more generally needed in a luxurious age like this. Economy does not obtain in these days the place to which it is entitled in the education of life. It is looked upon with dislike as a mean and sordid necessity. It is confounded with petty selfish saving for the mere sake of saving. Many are therefore ashamed to practise it, as beneath the dignity of human nature; many never learn its value until it is too late. But though not a brilliant quality, economy is in reality

more useful and more truly noble than some other qualities which captivate the imagination, but are so rare that few have an opportunity of practising them. It is a virtue for everyday use, and one that ought to be found in every home from the highest to the lowest, whatever the income and scale of expenditure may be. It is the basis and support of all the other virtues. Neither elegant manners, nor dazzling talents, nor social successes will avail much in the end where it is wanting. How many families are plunged in inextricable difficulties, obliged to keep up false appearances, and to depend upon the chapter of accidents, owing to their habit of living beyond their means. How many otherwise able and estimable men have by their want of economy first ruined themselves and then preyed upon their friends until they became social pests; when but for this one fatal defect they might have passed through life with honour and success and proved the benefactors of society. Want of economy is the worst form of selfishness. It seeks to secure its own indulgences no matter at whose cost; and it breaks down the moral principle, until in the end it becomes associated with meanness, servility, and an utter disregard of justice and honour.

But the practise of economy can be based upon higher grounds than mere worldly prudence, even upon that foundation upon which our Lord Himself rested it in the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. We are not to waste the resources which have been bestowed upon us for religious ends. Without

economy we cannot have the means to give liberally to the cause of God It is necessary to gather up the fragments of God's daily provision for us in order to be in a position to serve Him. Unless we carefully husband these, we cannot have the time to serve Him *personally*, not by deputy or substitute bought with money, but personally by our own individual services, which is the primary duty of every Christian. The man of extravagant desires and expensive habits must work hard, if he be honest, to furnish means for his extravagances. He has not therefore leisure or composure or freedom of mind to engage heartily in the service of God. His whole time is occupied, his whole heart is filled with serving tables, providing for his own selfish pleasures or those of his family. And this is one of the most crying evils resulting from the extravagance of the age, that it needs in order to keep it up an amount of devotion to the service of the world which leaves no time or strength for the personal service of God; and that it wastes upon inferior transient tasks powers which ought to be kept fresh and strong for the noble and enduring work to which every human being is called.

On the page of nature he who runs may read in a hundred different forms the same wise lesson which our Lord taught in His miracle. Nature is a rigid economist. In her household there is no waste. Everything is utilised to the utmost. The decay of rocks forms the soil of plants; and the decay of plants forms the mould in which future plants will grow. The

sunlight and carbonic acid gas of past ages which seemed to be wasted upon a desert world, have been stored up in the form of coal for the benefit of man. The water that seems to be dissipated in the air descends in dew and rain to refresh and quicken the earth. The matter that has served its purpose in one object goes by death and decomposition to form another object with a different purpose to serve. The materials which the animal kingdom receives from the mineral and vegetable kingdoms must be restored in order that they may be carefully circulated without diminution or waste over the whole earth. The gases that disappear in one form reappear in another. Forces are changed into their equivalents. Heat becomes motion, and motion heat. Nowhere is there any waste. In the ashes of every fire, in the decay of every plant, in the death and decomposition of every animal there is change, but not loss, death, but not waste. Everything is made the most of. The fragments of every product of nature are gathered up carefully and made to serve a useful purpose in a new form at nature's feast. Amid all her lavishness nature is very saving. The brilliant hues of flowers which the poet and artist love are not mere idle adornments, but have a practical purpose to fulfil. The beauty and fragrance which we so much admire appear only when the fertilisation of the plant by insect agency is necessary; and when this task is accomplished, she withdraws them, as we put out the lights and remové the garlands when the banquet is over. In the most economical manner

nature gets her new effects not by producing new objects, but by effecting a few modifications upon the old ones; and when she makes a blossom on an apple tree she simply shortens and alters what would otherwise have been a common leafy branch; all the parts of the inflorescence of the commonest wayside weed, the bract, the calyx, petal, stamen, pistil and seed, in spite of all their differences of form and colour are but successive transformations of the leaf. Thus our Lord teaches us by the common processes of nature the lesson of economy.

In the sphere of human art we find that there is a growing tendency to economise materials. The distinguishing characteristic of our arts and manufactures is economy. Substances which our forefathers threw away are now converted into useful and valuable products. We extract beautiful colours from the dung-heap, and delicious perfumes and essences from the offal of the streets. Every day we are finding out more and more that nothing is useless; that even the waste and refuse of our manufactures may be turned to profitable account, and made to minister to the necessities or the comfort of man. By the work of our own hands therefore our Lord is teaching us the lesson of economy.

But while we are thus increasingly economical in one direction, we are increasingly extravagant in another. The improvements in our arts and manufactures involve the waste of substances far more valuable than any we have utilised, and whose loss cannot be replaced. A writer in an admirable article in the *Quarterly Journal*

of Science, from which the facts in the following pages have been derived, has drawn attention to the culpable recklessness with which we use up in our industrial operations substances necessary to the production of human food. The supply of such substances in nature is comparatively limited, and they ought therefore to be most carefully economised, and employed only for the most essential purposes. And yet they are squandered by us in the most foolish manner as if we had an unlimited store to fall back upon. Chief among these substances are the nitrogenous bodies. Nitrogen is an indispensable element of life. It is present in every seed and egg, and takes part in all the changes which plants and animals undergo in their growth and maintenance. Without it blood, milk, nervous tissue and muscle would be impossible. Owing to its great mobility and power of combination with other elements, it forms an endless variety of compounds, acids and alkalies the most powerful, dyes the most useful, medicines the most energetic, and poisons the most deadly. There is hardly any organic compound, existing in a natural condition or prepared by man, which does not owe the remarkable qualities which it possesses to nitrogen. For this reason it enters largely into the arts and manufactures, and more than any other element is exposed to waste. We are constantly setting free vast quantities of it from its combined form, in which it is most serviceable, into its gaseous condition in the atmosphere in which it is singularly negative and inert.

There are three ways in which it may be said that we are grievously wasting this most precious element. The first is by our failure to restore to the soil the nitrogenous substances that we take from it. No question of the present day is more important or perplexing than the utilising of our sewage; and it will continue to perplex and annoy us until we find some practical method of obeying the simple law of nature. The only condition of its ceasing to be an evil is that it shall be converted into a good. Meantime we are pursuing the plan mentioned in the fable of Hercules who cleansed the Augean stable by forcing the waters of a river through it. We are polluting our streams and pouring into the sea every day vast quantities of the most valuable fertilising materials. It has been calculated that the amount of nitrogen annually lost in our country in this way, if returned to the soil, would be equivalent in the form of bread to more than five thousand millions of quartern loaves. Mr. Mechi tells us that the inhabitants of London consume daily the annual available produce of 20,000 acres, and a similar quantity is required weekly for London horses. The manurial wealth of this is wasted by conveyance into the sea; and the country loses as much in available material for food as if three million quartern loaves were daily floating down the Thames to the German Ocean. Even in country districts where the manure is stored up, its most valuable ingredients—the volatile or azotised portions by being freely exposed to rain and sunshine

—are allowed to escape, so that what is applied to the soil is in many cases only an impotent residuum. It may safely be said that scarcely a half of the fertilising materials that are used up in the growth of our food and consumed by us in town and country, are ever restored to the fields from whence they came. We endeavour to make up for this waste by importing guano and other manures from foreign countries; but this is only a temporary expedient which must fail in the end and involve the sources of our supply in the same loss.

Another way in which we waste this essential element of life is in the preparation of alcoholic beverages. Whatever view may be taken of the expediency or inexpediency of the use of such beverages, no one who is not prejudiced by personal interest but must sincerely lament the enormous destruction of human food involved in their manufacture. Not only is the grain diverted from the best purpose to which it could be applied in the preparation of bread; but in the various stages of the process a very large proportion of its nitrogenous material is wasted, and the liquor which is supplied to the consumer is of very little dietetic value. This waste is all the more inexcusable, as there are many other substances not used in human food from which these beverages might be prepared.

But the most unjustifiable waste of all is in connection with the use of gunpowder and other explosive substances, in which nitrogen, owing to its great gaseous elasticity, is the most important factor. An immense

quantity of these substances is employed for blasting purposes, in the construction of works of public utility, and in the extraction of metals and building stones from mines and quarries. This use of them cannot be dispensed with; and there are no substitutes in which oxidised nitrogen is not an essential element. But the vast scale upon which war is conducted in these times necessitates an extraordinary expenditure of gunpowder. And the process by which the nitre contained in it is obtained is a most wasteful one. The writer to which I have already referred says that upwards of ten million pounds of combined nitrogen are in this way yearly withdrawn from the world's available fertilising resources; which, if translated into human food, would mean the destruction in advance of no less than five hundred millions of pounds of bread. This is a new argument against war, the cogency of which will be appreciated more and more as the years go on.

It is doubtful if we are not paying too dear for many of the conveniences and comforts of our civilised life. The power of striking a light whenever we want it is got by the waste of so much phosphorus, which is one of the principal elements of vitality, and exists in nature only to a limited extent. The manufacture and printing of our cotton goods, as well as the preparation of articles of clothing in the laundry in accordance with the rules of fashion, requires the consumption of a vast amount of starch, which is procured from our cereals by the separation and waste of the gluten, which is rich

in nitrogen ; a precious substance indispensable for food, existing in comparatively small quantity, being thus destroyed in order to prepare another substance of much lower value, which nature produces in almost endless profusion, existing not only in grains and esculent roots, but also in the trunks of trees, especially the sago palm, and throughout nearly the whole tissue of the higher orders of plants. Are we not, by our too lavish and reckless use of coal, the great aliment of our industrial operations, rapidly reducing the supply which our country possesses of this invaluable mineral?

The substances I have indicated are not generated in nature as rapidly as they are consumed by man. It does not appear that there is at work any natural process which will prepare them in sufficient quantities or in suitable forms for being used over again in human economy ; or if there be any such processes, they are so extremely slow that they can hardly be taken into account, requiring ages like geological periods, for their completion.

It may be said that there is no lack of the prime necessaries of life in the world at large, and the waste in one place can be made up by superabundance in another. But the march of civilisation is rapidly reducing all countries to the same condition. Not very long ago, our own country produced a sufficient amount of food for its own population. It is now importing, in enormous and ever-increasing quantities, both food and manures. And those parts of America from which it originally received its supplies are now

themselves falling back upon the surplus produce of regions farther removed and recently brought under cultivation. But there can be no doubt that there also the same effects will ensue, and that ere many years have passed away the new land will sink to the same condition as that in the older settlements. Essentially vicious is the "skinning system" of the great western prairies, for it is fast realising the fixed capital of the nation, represented in the accumulated power of these prairies, sending it over the seas in the shape of food, and receiving back not what may keep up the fertility of the soil, but what is utterly useless for that purpose, mere money that may be spent in idleness or noxious luxury. The same wasteful expenditure is going on in California, Hungary, South Russia, Chili, and wherever the exportation of food and manures is the principal branch of commerce. The world is beginning to realise the serious fact that its rescources are not inexhaustible; and that the wants of its vast industries, and its teeming populations, are rapidly encroaching upon the limits of these. Such a fact would seem to lend very little countenance to the dreams of indefinite improvement which we cherish regarding the future of our race.

The only effectual remedy would be to bring the population of every country into more direct contact with the cultivation of its soil so that it might become self-sustaining, to restore every particle of the fertilising materials which have been received from the land in forms capable of assimilation, and to

restrict the use of potash, phosphorus, and nitrogen, to the preparation of articles of food and medicine; finding substitutes for their present reckless application in the arts and manufactures in substances not so essential to life. Let not the awful lesson which God taught the Israelites of old be thrown away upon us. They wasted the natural resources of their country; and that state of things which Moses foretold actually happened, "And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its increase." God punishes us in the line of our offence. His judgments are not capricious and arbitrary, which He will remove on our imploring Him to withhold His hand. They are warnings and punishments intended to set us earnestly to find out their causes and remove them. And the repentance which He values is the resolute putting away of the sin that has brought the evil upon us; and the prayer that He will not despise is the effort to act in conformity with His wise and righteous will, as that will is expressed to us in the harmonious arrangements of the world and of society, which are all meant to work together for good to them that fear God and keep His commandments.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SPECTRE OF THE OLD NATURE.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—ROMANS vii. 24.

SOME years ago a large number of peculiar photographs were circulated in America by spiritualists. Two portraits appeared on the same card, one clear and distinct, and the other faint and obscure. The fully-developed portrait was the obvious likeness of the living person who sat to the photographer; and the indistinct portrait was supposed to be the likeness of some dead friend, produced by supernatural agency. Several specimens of these double photographs were sent to this country, and the mystery that had been made use of to foster a gross superstition was found to admit of an easy scientific explanation. Photographic portraits are first taken as negatives on glass plates, and from these plates they are printed as positives on cards. It not unfrequently happens that the portrait of a person is so deeply impressed on the glass of the negative by the action of the light, that although the plate is

thoroughly washed and cleansed even with strong acid, the picture cannot be removed from it, although it is made invisible. When such a plate is used over again, the original image faintly reappears along with the new portrait. Beyond the substantial and fully-developed figure of the person last taken, is the shadowy outline of some unknown person, occupying the same chair and exhibiting a ghostly repetition of the same accessories.

Now, as it is with these double or phantom photographs, so is it in the experience of the Christian. He has been washed and purified in the blood of Christ; the old man, with his sinful deeds, has been put off, and the new man, which after God is renewed in knowledge and holiness, put on. Beholding the glory of Christ as in a glass, he is changed into the same image. And yet, notwithstanding all this, the ghost of his former sinfulness, the phantom of the old nature, persists in reappearing side by side with the image of the new man. So deeply are the traces of the former godless life impressed upon the soul, that even the sanctification of the Spirit, carried on through the discipline of trials, bitter and burning as any corrosive acid, cannot altogether remove them. They may seem to vanish for a while, but again and again they reappear when the slightest temptation presents itself. The Christian is indeed a new creature in Christ Jesus; but all old things have not passed away. The remains of former corruption still exist in his soul. The sins formerly committed passed into the very substance of his being. The memory

of them often rises up to haunt him and mock his repentance.

Such was the experience of St. Paul. He passed through an ideal death, a spiritual martyrdom, to a nobler life in Christ Jesus; and yet the image of his former life, the old body of death, kept ever reappearing. He strove to forget the things that were behind, but they intruded on his holiest and heavenliest moments. Thoughts and suggestions of evil started up even when he was most occupied in communion with Christ. The photographer is familiar with a process which completely obliterates his picture, so that the card upon which it is printed may be used for any other purpose; but though utterly invisible, the picture still exists, and may at any time be revived from its dormant state by brushing it over with a certain chemical solution. And so it was with the Apostle. The sin that so easily beset him seemed to disappear altogether for a time; but it returned with fresh power in circumstances favourable to it, and made him almost despair of renewing efforts so often defeated. And this confession of his powerlessness to throw off the incubus was made, not when he was a mere novice in the Divine life and the scales had newly fallen from his eyes, but after he had been thirty years a Christian and twenty years an Apostle, and was ready to be offered up on the altar of the martyr's sacrifice. The sense of the contrast between the two natures within him became stronger and more painful with his growth in grace. The more he believed, the more he felt the obstinacy of his unbelief. The

brighter the light, the deeper the surrounding darkness. Sin became more hateful as he became more holy; and the more he was possessed with the spirit of Christ, the more he was conscious of the indwelling of the spirit of evil. As he rose to higher altitudes of spiritual attainment, he sunk lower in his own estimation; and the more elevated and comprehensive his views of salvation, the profounder and more personal became his sense of guilt.

The "body of death," to which the Apostle alludes, is not something that has come to us from without, an infected garment that may be thrown aside whenever we please. It is a part of ourselves. It is not as some imagine, a spiritual monomania, a nightmare of the soul, a morbid hypochondriacal state of mind. It is our own corrupt self, our own wicked will, alienated from the life of God,—not our individual sins or evil habits, but our sinful nature, which we cannot ignore and from which we cannot separate. And this body of death disintegrates the purity and unity of the soul and destroys the love of God and man which is the true life of the soul. It acts like an evil leaven, corrupting and decomposing every good feeling and heavenly principle and gradually assimilating our being to itself. There is a peculiar disease which often destroys the silkworm before it has woven its cocoon. It is caused by a species of white mould which grows with great rapidity within the body of the worm at the expense of its nutritive fluids; all the interior organs being gradually converted into a mass of flocculent

vegetable matter. Thus the silkworm, instead of going on in the natural order of development to produce the beautiful winged moth, higher in the scale of existence and partaker of a freer and larger life, retrogrades to the lower condition of the inert senseless vegetable. And like the growth of this fungus in the caterpillar is the effect of the body of death in the soul of man. The heart cleaves to the dust of the earth, and man, made in the image of God, instead of developing a higher and purer nature, is reduced to the low, mean condition of the slave of Satan.

None but those who have attained to some measure of the experience of St. Paul can know the full wretchedness caused by this body of death. The careless have no idea of the agony of a soul under a sense of sin; of the tyranny which it exercises and the misery which it works. They have no deep feeling of inward discord; of their true higher life being choked and degraded by an alien parasitic power of evil. They are asleep and at ease in Zion; their consciences do not accuse them, their memories do not haunt them. Worldly conformity is their practice; worldly expediency their principle. Their will being on the side of sin, they have no conflict, no sense of resistance. And even in the experience of many Christians there is but little of that peculiar wretchedness caused by the presence of the body of death. Conviction is in too many instances superficial, and a mere impulse or emotion is regarded as a sign of conversion; and hence many are deluded with a false hope, having little knowledge

of the law of God or sensibility to the depravity of their own hearts. But such was not the experience of St. Paul. At his conversion for three days he lay blind and miserable, fasting and fainting under a crushing sense of guilt; and throughout his whole subsequent life the remembrance and the burden of his sin drew from him a cry of wretchedness which the severest of his outward trials, and even the prospect of martyrdom, were powerless to extort. The body of corruption that he bore about with him,—the conscious living death, the sense of discord owing to the law in his members warring against the law of his mind,—this it was that darkened and embittered all his Christian experience. Even when struggling so earnestly against sin that he could honestly say, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," he felt the wretchedness of the body of death. And so it is with every true Christian. It is not the spectre of the future, or the dread of the punishment of sin, that he fears, for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus; but the spectre of the sinful past and the pressure of the present evil nature. Grafted in Christ, it seems as if, notwithstanding, he were bearing the evil fruit of the old depraved nature and not the fruit of the Spirit—the fruit of the graft of the new nature. The sin which he fancied was so superficial that a few years' running in the Christian course would shake it off, he finds in reality deep-rooted in his very nature, requiring a life-long battle. The fearful foes which he bears in his own

bosom—sins of unrestrained appetite, sins that spring from past habits, frequently triumph over him; and all this fills him almost with despair—not of God, but of himself—and extorts from him the groan, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

The evil to be cured is beyond human remedy. The various influences that act upon us from without,—instruction, example, education, the discipline of life,—cannot deliver us from this body of death. The work is Christ's and not man's. In the same breath in which we cry for deliverance we can acknowledge with the Apostle the power of the Deliverer and the grace of deliverance, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." We are to fight the battle in His name and in His strength, and to leave the issue in His hands. The strength is ours if we have only the will, for, through Christ strengthening us, we can do all things. He will deliver us in His own way and in His own time. Not at once, for we must remember "the long day and the long way of the Lord." Through the struggle our spiritual discipline is carried on. The new life, like all life, must grow slowly and painfully, and by growth take full possession of our whole being as its own and transform us in the renewing of our minds.

We can reverse the illustration with which I began this meditation. If behind our renewed self is the spectral form of our old self, let us remember that behind all is the image of God in which we were created. The soul, however lost, however darkened

and defaced, still retains some lingering traces of the glory in which it was first created, some lineaments of the Divine impression with which it was once stamped. That image haunts us always; it is the ideal from which we have fallen and towards which we are to be conformed. To rescue that image of God from its dishonour and pollution, and to make it shine in all its original beauty and lustre, the Son of God assumed our nature, lived our life, and died our death; and His Spirit becomes incarnate in our heart and life, and prolongs the work of Christ in us, in His own sanctifying work. And as our nature becomes more and more like Christ's, so by degrees the old nature photographed by sin upon the soul will cease to haunt us, and the image of Christ will become more and more vivid and distinct. And at length only *one* image will remain on the pure heart that shall see God, and the holy life that shall maintain unbroken communion and fellowship with Him. We shall see Him as He is, and we shall become like Him, presented *faultless* before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

THE END.

London:
R. Clay, Sons, and Taylor,
bread street hill, E.C.

WORKS

BY THE

REV. HUGH MACMILLAN, LL.D., F.R.S.E.

BIBLE TEACHINGS IN NATURE. Thirteenth Edition. Crown 8vo, cloth. 6*s*.

"Ably and eloquently written. It is a thoughtful book, and one that is prolific of thought."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"Mr Macmillan writes extremely well, and has produced a book which may be fitly described as one of the happiest efforts for enlisting physical science in the direct service of religion. Under his treatment she becomes the willing handmaid of an instructed and contemplative devotion."—*The Guardian.*

"We part from Mr. Macmillan with exceeding gratitude. He has made the world more beautiful to us, and unsealed our ears to voices of praise and messages of love that might otherwise have been unheard. We commend the volume not only as a valuable appendix to works of natural theology, but as a series of prose-idylls of unusual merit."—*British Quarterly Review.*

SEQUEL TO "BIBLE TEACHINGS IN NATURE."

THE SABBATH OF THE FIELDS. Third Edition. Globe 8vo. 6*s*.

"This book is a worthy sequel to Mr. Macmillan's admirable 'Bible Teachings in Nature.' In it there is the same intimate communion with nature and the same kind of spiritual instruction as in its predecessor."—*Standard.*

"This volume, like all Dr. Macmillan's productions, is very delightful reading, and of a special kind. Imagination, natural science, and religious instruction are blended together in a very charming way."—*British Quarterly Review.*

OUR LORD'S THREE RAISINGS FROM THE DEAD. In Globe 8vo. Price 6*s*.

"His narrative style is pleasant, and his reflections sensible."—*Westminster Review.*

MACMILLAN AND CO., LONDON.

Works by the Rev. Hugh Macmillan, LL.D., F.R.S.E.

(*Continued.*)

THE MINISTRY OF NATURE. Fourth Edition. Globe 8vo. 6*s.*

"The author exhibits throughout his writings the happiest characteristics of a God-fearing, and withal, essentially liberal and unprejudiced mind. Of the Essays themselves we cannot speak in terms of too warm admiration."—*Standard.*

"We can give unqualified praise to this most charming and suggestive volume. As studies of nature they are new and striking in information, beautiful in description, rich in spiritual thought, and especially helpful and instructive to all religious teachers. If a preacher desires to see how he can give freshness to his ministry, how he can clothe old and familiar truths in new forms, and so invest them with new attractions, how he can secure real beauty and interest without straining after effect, he could not do better than study this book."—*Nonconformist.*

THE TRUE VINE; OR, THE ANALOGIES OF OUR LORD'S ALLEGORY. Fourth Edition. Globe 8vo. 6*s.*

"The volume strikes us as being especially well suited for a book of devotional reading."—*Spectator.*

"Mr. Macmillan has thrown beautiful light upon many points of natural symbolism. Readers and preachers who are unscientific will find many of his illustrations as valuable as they are beautiful."—*British Quarterly Review.*

"It abounds in exquisite bits of description, and in striking facts clearly stated."—*Nonconformist.*

FIRST FORMS OF VEGETATION. Second Edition. Corrected and Enlarged. With Coloured Frontispiece and numerous Illustrations. Globe 8vo. 6*s.*

The first edition of this book was published under the name of "Footnotes from the Page of Nature; or, First Forms of Vegetation." Upwards of a hundred pages of new matter have been added to this new edition, and eleven new illustrations.

"Probably the best popular guide to the practical study of mosses, lichens, and fungi ever written. Its practical value as a help to the student and collector cannot be exaggerated, and it will be no less useful in calling the attention of others to the wonders of nature in the most modern products of the vegetable world."—*Manchester Examiner.*

HOLIDAYS ON HIGH LANDS; OR, RAMBLES AND INCIDENTS IN SEARCH OF ALPINE PLANTS. Second Edition. Revised and Enlarged. Globe 8vo. 6*s.*

"A series of delightful lectures on the botany of some of the best known mountain regions."—*Guardian.*

"Mr. Macmillan's glowing pictures of Scandinavian nature are enough to kindle in every tourist the desire to take the same interesting high lands for the scenes of his own autumn holidays."—*Saturday Review.*

MACMILLAN AND CO., LONDON.

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries
1 1012 01247 0466